



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

50.1584.

253 e. 918







LEONARD LINDSAY:

OR,

THE STORY OF A BUCCANEER.

BY

ANGUS B. REACH.



"NO PEACE BEYOND THE LINE."—*Old Sailors' Proverb.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
DAVID BOGUE, 86, FLEET STREET.

MDCCCL.

TO
ROBERT CARRUTHERS,
OF THE
INVERNESS COURIER,

A GENTLEMAN WHOSE HIGH LITERARY ACQUIREMENTS

AND EXQUISITE LITERARY TASTE

HAVE BEEN TOO MUCH SHADED BY UNOBTRUSIVE

AND UNPRETENDING MODESTY,

I Inscribe this Book.



PREFACE.

MY design in writing the following pages was two-fold. I wished to amuse, and in doing so, quietly and unpretendingly, to convey information.

“Buccaneer” is a word which people have very commonly in their mouths, but the real meaning of which is not by any means so often in their heads. Indeed, the expression is very frequently used as a polite synonym for pirate, and a great many intelligent folks are possessed with the notion that the Buccaneers were desperate miscreants, who used to sail the seas under the blood-red flag, or the death’s head and cross bones, pillaging every lawful trading ship, and cutting the throats of every honest crew they came across.

Now, this is a notion very far from being correct. The Buccaneers were not, as a body, pirates. I admit at once that the predatory and

irregular nature of the warfare they waged has, naturally enough, led to the imputation on the part of those who have never studied the circumstances under which this singular body of adventurers originated. It is only necessary, however, to state in a sentence or two what these circumstances were, at once to disentangle such men as Mansveldt, Morgan, Dampier, and their comrades, from any such Old Bailey-like charge as that of "Murder and Piracy on the High Seas."

The Buccaneers were then the immediate and necessary offspring of the grasping West Indian policy of Spain. On the discovery of the New World, the court of Castile claimed it rather in the light of a royal appanage than that of a colonial empire. Spain pretended to absolute dominion and absolute property in continent and isle. She claimed the right of exclusive traffic in all the riches of the New World, and yearly sent forth her galleons to carry home a kingly tribute of slaves and spices, and costly woods and gold. The very presence of an English, French, or Dutch ship in the Caribbean Sea was in itself a *casus belli* as against that ship, and straightway the caravels of Arragon and Castile sallied forth to hunt the poacher upon their rich preserves.

Although, in process of time, the territorial claims of Spain shrunk somewhat in extent, the spirit of these claims continued, under successive sovereigns, to be unabated in haughty and pretentious insolence, and at one time drew from the cabinet of Queen Elizabeth the following terse despatch, sounding between an energetic remonstrance and a careless defiance.

The Spanish ambassador had complained touching certain Spanish ships plundered by English subjects in the West Indian seas. The Queen replied—

“That the Spaniards had drawn these inconveniences upon themselves, by their severe and unjust dealings in their American commerce, for she did not understand why either her subjects, or those of any other European prince, should be debarred from traffic in the Indies. That as she did not acknowledge the Spaniards to have any title by the donation of the Bishop of Rome, so she knew no right they had to any places other than those they were in actual possession of; for that their having touched only here and there upon a coast, and given names to a few rivers or capes, were such insignificant things, as could in no ways entitle them to a property further than

in the parts where they actually settled, and continued to inhabit."

Thus, just as the present system of commercial exclusiveness of Spain peoples the Pyrenees with regularly organized smugglers, lately, by the way, recognised by the Spanish government itself as forming an "interest," so did her old system of commercial exclusiveness in the West Indies change to the character of warlike adventurers those who, in other circumstances, would have been peaceful navigators and industrious traffickers. Spain might say what she chose; Maritime Europe would not keep to the Old World when there was a new one within two months' sail, and, accordingly, to quote Burney in his *History of the Buccaneers*—"a warfare was thus established between Europeans in the West Indies, local and confined, which had no dependence upon transactions in Europe. All Europeans, not Spaniards, whether it was war or peace between their nations at home, on meeting in the West Indies, regarded each other as friends and allies, knowing there no other enemy than the Spaniards; and, as a kind of public avowal of this confederation, they called themselves the 'Brethren of the Coast.'"

The Buccaneers, then, or Brethren of the Coast, were simply the representatives of maritime Europe fighting against absolute Spanish supremacy in the West Indies. The Spaniards, of course, looked on them as murderers and robbers. They generally called and considered themselves, Privateersmen, and frequently carried letters of marque issued by any European nation with which Spain was at war. But the great warrant and the great guarantee of the Buccaneers was the public opinion of Europe, which, not perhaps in an open and avowed, but certainly in a mode which was just as intelligible, applauded every achievement performed, and stimulated the adventurers to new feats.

I have already admitted, that in this species of marine guerilla warfare, undertaken by private individuals at their own cost, and for their own profit, circumstances were likely to arise, branding the system with the imputation of piracy. There is no doubt also, but that the Buccaneers were frequently anything but reputable characters. Their hazardous way of life was often taken to by broken and desperate men, and during the latter part of their existence, the plantations of Virginia and Maryland sent a constant

stream of English desperadoes into the West Indies. Admitting all this, and all its probable consequences, the point remains unimpeached, that Buccaneering was not necessarily Piracy, and that many men as honest and well meaning, as they were daring and reckless, sailed with Sharpe, Morgan, and Coxon.

So much premised, I leave the tale which follows, fully to develop my views as to the moral and political status of the Buccaneers.

This, then, being the end in view, I have sought to attain it, by the construction of an unpretending and plotless story of personal adventure, constructed expressly in order to throw full light upon the Buccaneers, in all their various relations and shades of character, and to convey a correct and authentic impression of their ways of life and ordinary habits of thought, speech and action.

There is a Buccaneer of conventional romance, and a Buccaneer of actual historic fact. My hero belongs to the latter class.

The authentic information which we possess touching the "Brotherhood of the Coast," is principally contained in miserably dry histories, giving an old almanac sort of account of an interminable number of predatory expeditions at sea and on

the main land, the general features of each voyage being so precisely similar, that the effect is one of the most dreary monotony. Nevertheless, by means of a diligent course of reading and collating these not very interesting volumes, I have sought to pick up every available crumb of really authentic information, bearing upon the character, condition, and personal habits of the English, French, and Dutch adventurers in the West Indies, stringing these morsels of truth upon a thread of adventures, several of which are founded upon fact, and every one of which might have happened in the course of such a life as was led by the Buccaneers.

The old adage of "Birds of a feather," seems to have been amply verified in the case of these West-Indian adventurers. Sometimes we find a crew of men appearing to have been rough, honest sailors, and quite as humane and moderate in their dealing with Spanish prisoners, as could be expected, considering the spirit of the times. Again, we read of an expedition evidently composed of as great ruffians as ever went unhanged. Each class of adventurers, however, seem to have pretty generally kept apart from

each other, and to have respectively chosen captains of their own kidney.

Two such crews, and two such captains, I have endeavoured to sketch as manning and commanding the "Will-o'-the-Wisp" and the "Saucy Susan."

As for my hero, I have attempted to portray the probable views, feelings, and conduct of an intelligent young sailor, flung by circumstances into a wild and reckless course of life, for which he has no particular natural predilection, but to which, sailor-like, he instinctively adapts himself, swimming on, in fact, with the current into which he finds he has been thrown.

I have only to add, that the period selected for the story, may be called the middle epoch of the Buccaneers. Of their very early time, the information we have is excessively scant, and, in their latter days—when under the leadership of Morgan—they generally sailed in large fleets, and conducted their operations with such disciplined regularity as materially to detract from the more individualised and romantic character of their former achievements.

London, April, 1850.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.	
	PAGE
OF MY BOYHOOD, AND HOW BEING CAST AWAY AT SEA, I AM CARRIED TO THE WEST INDIES AGAINST MY WILL	1
CHAPTER II.	
OF MY ESCAPE FROM THE FRENCH SHIP, AND MY LANDING IN HISPANIOLA	29
CHAPTER III.	
I JOIN A BROTHERHOOD OF HUNTERS AND ADVEN- TUREERS ON THE COAST	42
CHAPTER IV.	
OF THE LIFE OF A BUCCANEER	61
CHAPTER V.	
HOW WE ENCOUNTER GREAT DANGERS, THE SPANIARDS ATTACKING US	69

CHAPTER VI.

	PAGE
HOW THE DEADLY FEVER OF THE COAST FASTENS ON ME	92

CHAPTER VII.

THE BUCCANEERS TIRE OF THE LIFE ON SHORE, AND DETERMINE TO GO AGAIN TO SEA	103
---	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LEGEND OF FOUL-WEATHER DON	117
--	-----

CHAPTER IX.

THE AUTHOR, WITH SUNDEY OF HIS COMRADES, SET OUT FOR THE CREEK WHERE HE LEFT HIS BARK, AND THERE BRAVELY CAPTURE A SPANISH SCHOONER .	143
---	-----

CHAPTER X.

THEY RETURN WITH THE PRIZE TO THE MARMOUSETTES, AND NICKY HAMSTRING SHORTLY RELATES HIS HIS- TORY	166
---	-----

CHAPTER XI.

THE BUCCANEERS PRESENTLY SET SAIL IN THE SCHOONER FOR JAMAICA, WITH A RELATION OF THE EVENTS WHICH HAPPENED THERE	178
---	-----

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE DEATH OF AN OLD FRIEND	202
---	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BUCCANEERS SAIL FOR THE SPANISH MAIN, AND ARE CHASED BY A GREAT SHIP OF WAR	212
--	-----

CONTENTS.

XV

CHAPTER XIV.

	PAGE
THE STRANGE ADVENTURE OF THE UNKNOWN SHOALS AND THE DWARF PILOT	226

CHAPTER XV.

AT LENGTH THEY CATCH THE DWARF PILOT, AND HEAR STRANGE THINGS TOUCHING A TREASURE. .	253
---	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

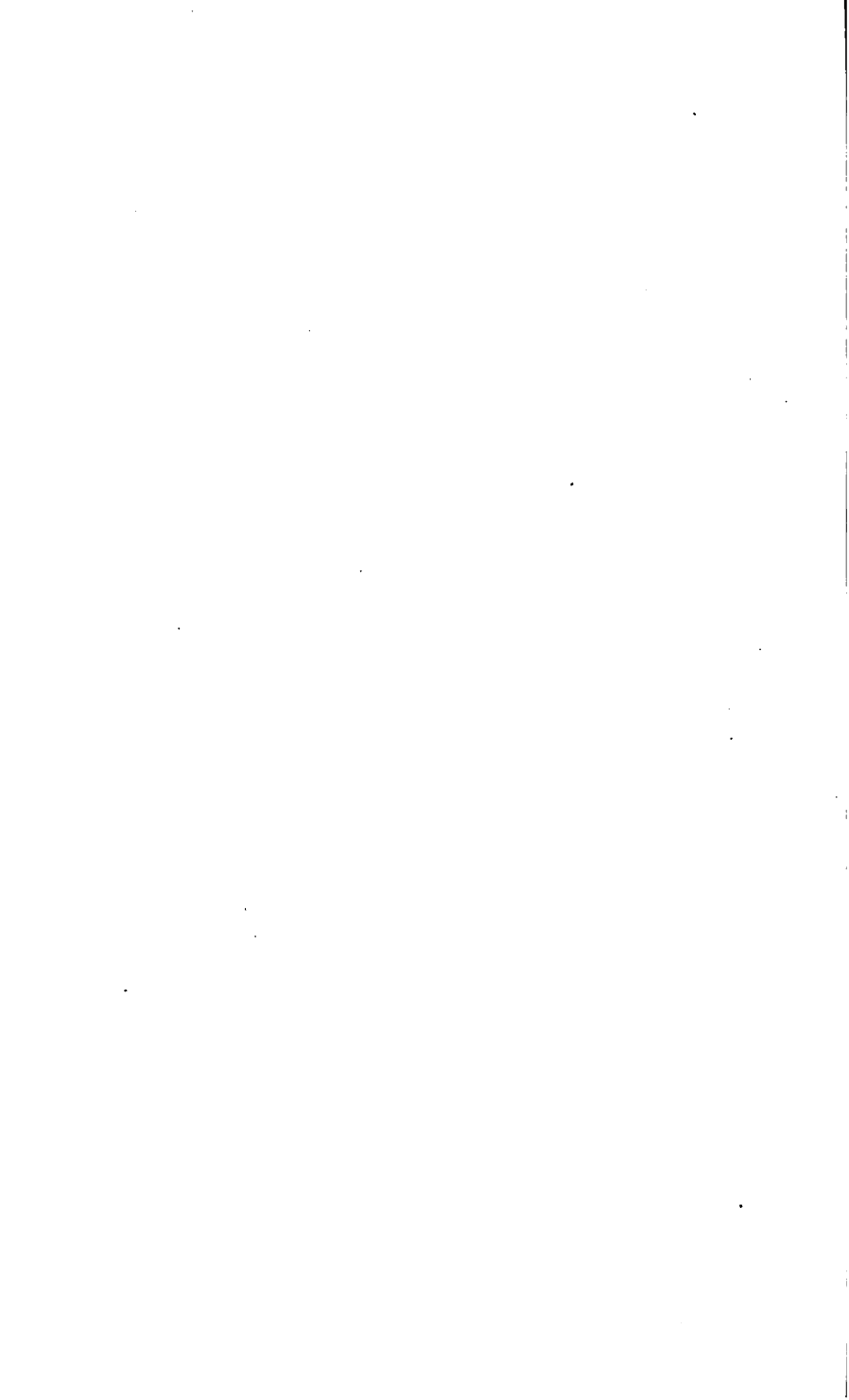
HOW THE DWARF TURNS TRAITOR, AND OF HIS FATE. .	274
---	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

OF THEIR UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH FOR THE SUNKEN TREASURE—WEARYING AT LENGTH OF THE UNDER- TAKING, THEY PURSUE THEIR COURSE—THE LE- GENDS OF "NELL'S BEACON," OR THE "CORPUS SANT"	295
---	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

A KNAVE OF THE CREW, PLAYING WITH COGGED DICE, IS KEEL-HAULED	307
--	-----



LEONARD LINDSAY:

OR,

THE STORY OF A BUCCANEER.

CHAPTER I.

OF MY BOYHOOD, AND HOW, BEING CAST AWAY AT SEA, I AM
CARRIED TO THE WEST INDIES AGAINST MY WILL.

It was in the fair sunlight of a May morning, in the year of Grace 1672, that that great brave ship, the Golden Grove of Leith, hoisted her broad sails, with many a fluttering pendant and streamer above them, and stood proudly down the Firth of Forth, designing to reach the open ocean, not far from the hill, well known to mariners by the name of the North Berwick Law. On board of the Golden Grove, I, LEONARD LINDSAY, then in my twenty-second year, was, you must know, a sailor, and I hope a bold one. My father was a fisherman, and, as I may say, his coble was my cradle. Many a rough rocking in truth it bestowed upon me, for it was his use

even before I could go alone, to carry me with him a fishing, wrapped up, it may be, in a tattered sail, while my mother, with a creel upon her back, journeyed through the landward towns, and to the houses of the gentry to sell the spoil of hook and net.

We fared hard and worked hard; for no more industrious folk lived in the fisher town of Kirk Leslie, a pleasant and goodly spot, lying not far from the East Neuk of Fife, than old Davie Lindsay and Jess, his wife and my mother. Many a weary night and day have come and gone since I beheld that beach whereon I was born; but I can yet shut my eyes and see our cottage and our boat—called the “Royal Thistle”—rocking at the lee of the long rough pier of unhewn whinstone, gathered from the wild muirs around, which ran into the sea and sheltered the little fisher harbour, formed by the burn of Balwearie, where it joins the waters of its black pools to the salt brine. Opposite our house was a pretty green bourock, as we called it, that is to say, a little hill, mostly of bright green turf, with bunches of bent and long grass, which rustled with a sharp sad sound when the east wind blew snell, and creeping cosily into the chimney neuk, we would listen to the roaring of the sea. But the bourock was oftentimes brown with nets or with wet sails stretched there to dry, and below it there lay half-

buried in the sand, old boats, mouldering away, and masts and oars all shivered, bleaching like big bones in the sun and the rain.

I remember old Davie Lindsay my father well. He was a stern, big man, with a grisly grey beard, shaved but once a month. No fisher on the coast had a surer hand for the tiller, or a firmer gripe to haul aft the sheet of the lugsail in a fresh breeze and a gathering sea. Often when we were rising and falling on the easterly swell, half-a-score miles from Kirk Leslie Pier, he loved to tell me old-world tales and sing old-world songs of the sea. Then would he recount how the Rover sunk the bell which good abbot Ignatius, of Aberbrothwick, caused to be placed upon the wild Bell Rock, as a guide to poor mariners; and how the pirate dreed the weird—that is, underwent the fate—he had prepared for himself, and was lost with ship and crew on that very reef. Sometimes, too, he would drop his voice, and when I came close to him, he would speak of great monsters in the sea; of the ocean snake, whose head looked up at the bridge of Stirling, and whose tail went nine times round the Bass; of singing mermaids, who come upon the yellow sands at night, and beguile men with their false lays, till they leave house and home, being bewitched by the glamour of elfin palaces under the brine; and, most terrible of all, of phantom ships with crews of ghosts,

which sailors see by the pale glimmerings of the moon, when it shines through the driving scud, upon a mirk midnight and a roaring sea. But, then, if I was frightened and cried, my father would straightway change the theme, and burst out with a strong clear voice into some loud fishing song, or, what I loved better still, into some brave, ancient ballad, about the fair kingdom of Scotland, and its gallant kings and stalwart knights; and of such, my favourite was the lay of Sir Patrick Spens, for he was both a knight and a sailor.

“The king sits in Dunfermline town,
Drinking the blude-red wine,
O whare will I get a skeely skipper
To sail this ship of mine?”

“Then up and spake an eldern knight,
Sat at the king’s right knee,
Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor
That ever sailed the sea.”

Oh, I can yet hear my father’s strong voice rising over the dash of the water and the moan of the wind, as he sung the brave voyage of Sir Patrick to Norroway, to bring home the king’s daughter; but his tones would sink and grow hoarse and low, when he chaunted the storm, and the perishing of all the fair company on the voyage home.

“O forty mile off Aberdeen,
’Tis fifty fathom deep,
And there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens,
Wi’ the Scots lords at his feet.”

My father's long home was also the bottom of the sea. One wild March day, the coble left Kirk Leslie pier without me. I staid at home mending a dredge-net with my mother. The easterly har was on the coast, that is to say, thick cold mists and a keen wind. As the sun rose high so did the tempest; we could see nought seaward, for the grey fog was out upon the water, but every wave came white, over and over the pier, from end to end. My mother went to and fro, wan, and praying to herself; as indeed did many another fisher-wife, for they had great cause. The night was awful. I sat cowering beside my mother, who was rocking herself on a settle with her apron over her head; or now and then stole down to the beach, to where men stood with lanterns upon masts to show the harbour mouth to the poor folks at sea. Three boats, with crews pale and worn, made the land before the day; an hour after dawn our coble came tossing to the outside belt of the surf—but she was bottom upwards.

In a month after this, my mother and I went to her father's, a very old man, and a reverend elder of the kirk. He sent me to school to Domine Buchanan, a learned carle, who by his own account behoved to be of the race of the great Geordie Buchanan, of whom they tell merry tales, which surely are idle and false, for he was a severe, grave man, and handled the tawse unmer-

cifully, as his royal pupil, gentle King Jamie, could in his time well testify. At school I was diligent, and pleased master and friends.

Afterwards, up to my sixteenth year, I went much a fishing in the boat of Saunders Drauglepute, my maternal uncle, when desiring to see more of my country than could be descried in our furthest voyages between Kirk Leslie pier and the deep-sea fisheries at the back of the Isle of May, I made many coasting trips, for the space of near five years, in the stout brig Jean Livingstone, belonging to Kirkaldy, during which time I twice visited the Thames and the city of London; plying also once each year with a great cargo of herrings to Antwerp, in the Low Countries. But still I wished to see the world further from home, and to this intent preferred rather to go on board the Golden Grove of Leith, as a common sailor, than to be mate of the Jean Livingstone, a promotion which was offered me by John Swançon, skipper and part owner of the brig.

The reason of my coming to think of the Golden Grove was, that the Jean Livingstone having a cargo of goods from Yarmouth to Edinburgh, lay while they were delivered close by the great ship, then preparing at the foot of Leith Wynd for a voyage to Italy, and from thence to divers ports on the Moorish side of the Mediterranean sea. Now Italy was a land which I

had long wished to behold, as being once the seat of that great people the Romans, some knowledge of the poetry and philosophy of whom, the worthy Domine Buchanan had not failed to instil into me, but which I oftentimes felt with pain to be fast fading from my mind. Indeed, I must tell you that it is to the exertions of that learned man that this narrative is altogether owing, for he, seeing, as he was pleased to say, a more congenial soil in my mind for the seeds of his instructions than was presented by the other fisher-boys, took great pains to imbue me with a love for the humanities, which has not deserted me entirely unto this day. After much pondering upon my prospects, I therefore finally made up my mind to offer myself on board of the *Golden Grove*, which I did, and was accepted without more ado. My friends would have me pause and think of the dangers of unknown coasts, and pirates and robbers of the sea, but I knew Captain John Coxon, of the *Golden Grove*, to be a stout and experienced seaman, and one who was readily trusted with rich freights—while as to freebooters, when I looked upon the array of culverins, demi-culverins, and falconets ranged upon the decks, and also the show of carabines and pattererroes placed about the masts, with many stout fellows to man and wield them, I felt we could bid defiance to any rover who ever sailed out of Sallee.

Therefore, to make a long story short, we completed our cargo, took in provisions and water, and, as has been said, on a fine May morning, I do not remember the exact day, sailed. The wind was so fair that by even-fall we saw St. Abb's Head.

And here at the outset of what was to me so adventurous a voyage, I would describe my captain and my shipmates, as well as the stout vessel herself, the latter being indeed a brave craft, with top-gallant forecastle and high poop, surmounted by three great lanterns; but, as the reader will shortly perceive, the Golden Grove and I soon parted company, and I never saw either her or any of her crew again.

We carried the fair north wind with us all along the English coast, until passing through the Straits of Dover we bade farewell to the white cliffs. Then in two days' time we saw upon the larboard bow great rocks which form the cape called La Hogue, in France, and passing to the westward of the island of Guernsey, sighted the little isle of Ushant lying off the port of Brest, where the French maintain fleets and great naval stores. Hereabouts the wind changed, veering round to the westward, and speedily rolling in upon us billows so vast that we could well discern that we were no longer in the narrow seas, but exposed to the great strength and fierceness of

the Atlantic or Western ocean. Notwithstanding, however, we made good progress; the breeze was not steady but blew in squalls, making it often necessary to hand topsails, and raising great seething seas around us, over which the Golden Grove rode very gallantly. At night-fall on the eighth day of our voyage, we lost sight of Ushant and entered into the great Bay of Biscay. The sea here runs exceedingly high, tumbling in to the shore in great ridges of blue water; but with a stout ship, well manned, the nature of the waves is not so dangerous as that of the short, boiling surges in the North Sea. And now I come to the accident which so sadly determined my lot for many a day.

On the morning of either the 13th or the 14th of May, the weather was squally and unsettled, and the sea irregular and high. About eight o'clock, looking forth to windward, I saw a great blackness in the sky, which I took to be the prelude of a gust of no common strength. At the same moment, the mate of the watch ordered the topmen aloft to hand the topsails, we carrying at the moment no higher canvass. My station was upon the leeward fore-topsail yardarm, and as I clung by the man-ropes to the great creaking pieces of timber, grasping the fluttering canvass of the sail, I thought I had never seen a finer sight than the great rolling ship below, wallowing

and labouring in the white foaming seas, which would sometimes strike her and pour heavy masses of clear green water in a flood over the decks. When we were securing the sail, the motion aloft was very great, we being violently swung from side to side in such wise as might well make giddy even the grizzled head of an old mariner. Meantime, the gust to windward was coming fast; the blackness increased, and a rushing sound, as of the chariot wheels of a host, rose above the rude clamour of the sea. Then, amid great showers of flying brine, which it drove before it, the fierce wind struck the Golden Grove bodily over upon her side. At the same instant, I heard a hoarse voice below summoning the men from the yards down upon deck; but as I was about to obey, the tempest grew terrible. There were great clouds of mist above me, through which I could see nought below but the white patches of waves breaking over the strong bulwarks of the ship. Suddenly the canvass, which had not been quite secured, was torn open, as it were, with a loud screech by the wind, and flapped and banged so that I felt the very mast shake and quiver violently, while I received rude blows from the loose and flying ropes, insomuch as, being half blinded by that and the pelting of the brine, I shut my eyes, and bending down my head grasped the yard firmly in my arms. I might

have remained thus three or four seconds, when I heard the loud howl of the wind suddenly increase to a sort of eldritch scream. In a moment, the mast gave two violent jerks, and with the third I heard five or six sounding twangs like the breaking of harp strings, and immediately a crashing of wood. Then, still clinging to the yard, I was hurried with a mighty rush through the air, and suddenly plunged down into the choking brine, which rose all gurgling over my head, and I knew at the same time that the Golden Grove had carried away her fore-topmast, and that I was overboard in the boiling sea.

By instinct, I suppose, I struggled so to climb upon the floating wreck as to get my head and shoulders above water. Then I saw that I was alone in my misery. I have said that my station was at the outer end of the yard, and I conceive that my shipmates must have gained the top, and from thence, I hoped, the deck. But as for me, I saw nought but speedy drowning for my fate. The seas rose in great foaming peaks and pyramids around me, and the wind drove drenching showers from the crests of the waves down into the hollows. All around gloomy clouds passed swiftly, torn by the squall, but the pitchy darkness which showed where its strength lay, was far down to leeward, and looking thereat as I rose upon a higher sea than common, I faintly descried

the ship in a crippled plight, but having managed to put her helm up so as to scud before the storm. She was already near a league away, and leaving me fast; so that the bitterness of death rose up in my very heart. For a moment I thought I might as well die at once, and letting go my hold of the spars, I allowed myself to sink backward into the sea. But God has wisely made man to love life with a clinging love, and to grapple with death as with a grim enemy. Therefore, as the water closed above me, and I felt suffocating, I could not help making a struggle, which soon replaced me on my desolate seat on the floating wreck. I looked at the spars, and saw that the topmast had broken only about a foot beneath the place to which the yard had been lowered. Nearly the whole of the foretop and topgallant-masts of the Golden Grove, with the fragments of the foretopsail, which had been rent almost into ribbons, and the yard to which they were fastened, lay therefore in the sea. I clambered in from the end of the yard, and took up my position where the mast and it crossed each other; making myself fast thereto with one of the numerous ends of broken rope which abounded, and for near an hour sat dismal and almost broken-hearted, unheeding of how the waves tossed me to and fro, or how they sometimes burst over and almost stifled me. I was somewhat roused by a feeling of

warmth, and looking abroad saw that the clouds had broken, and that the sun was shining brightly on the sea. The wind was also abated, and the waves not combing so violently, I was more at ease. Then I heard that terrible sound—the sound of the sea alone—which no one has listened to save he who has swam far from any vessel, or who, like myself, has clung to a driving spar. On the beach you hear the surf, where the waves burst upon rock or sand; on shipboard you hear the dashing of the billows on counter and prow; and, above them all, the sigh of the wind and the groaning of timbers and masts. But to hear the sea alone, you must be alone upon the sea. I will tell you of the noise: it is as of a great multitudinous hiss, rising universally about you—the buzz of the fermenting and yeasty waves. There are no deep, hollow rumblings; except for that hissing, seething sound, the great billows rise and sink in silence; and you look over a tumbling waste of blue or green water, all laced, and dashed, and variegated with a thousand stripes, and streaks, and veins of white glancing froth, which embroider, as it were with lace, the dark masses of heaving and falling ocean. Hearing this sound, and seeing this sight, I tossed until the sun got high and warm. I felt no very poignant anguish, for my soul was clothed, as it were, in a species of lethargy—the livery of despair. Sometimes only

I tried to pray, but thoughts and tongue would grow benumbed together.

Once, indeed, I was for a time aroused. I heard a sharp little dash in the water, and a soft quackle, as of a sea-fowl. Looking up, I descried beside me two ducks of that species which we, in the Scottish seas, called marrots; they are white on breast and neck, and brown above, and have very bright, glancing, yellow eyes. Moreover they dive, and use their short wings under water, as other fowls do theirs in flying. By the appearance of these creatures I knew that land was, at farthest, within two days' sail. There—tilting gaily over each sea—they swam for hours, seeming to look at me; sometimes they would dive, but they never went far from the wreck, always coming up and riding head to wind, with their keen yellow eyes fixed as I thought upon the poor drowning mariner. They seemed tame and fearless—for, indeed, what should they dread from me? Once, in a sort of melancholy mirth, I raised my arm threateningly, but they stirred neither wing nor leg to flee, lifting over seas which would make a great man of war work and groan to her very keel, but which these feathered ships, built by God, could outride without a film of down being washed aside from their white breasts.

The sun having attained its zenith, began to

descend the westerly skies, and the afternoon was fair and warm, the wind now blowing but a summer breeze. Sometimes, when on the crest of the swell, I looked anxiously for a sail, but I saw nought save the bright horizon, against which the sharp outlines of the waves rose and fell in varying curves and ridges; so that now again I resigned myself to death, and covering my face with my hands, I, as it were, moaned, rather than sung inwardly to myself, many verses of psalms, which, when I was but a little child, I had repeated at my mother's knee. Meantime, I began to feel a stiffening and a heavy drowsiness over all my limbs and upon my soul. When I opened my eyes the heaving waters turned into divers colours before my sight, so that I knew that my brain was wandering, and that my soul was departing. Howbeit, a holy tranquillity came down upon me. The blue sea appeared to melt away, and I saw—but dimly—the green bourock and the sweet soft swarded links of the Balwearie burn, with the brown herring nets drying on the windy grass. The place seemed holy and still; the sun was hot, and none were stirring, and presently I knew it was a summer's sabbath day, for from out the open windows of the grey old kirk there came a low sound of psalmody, and I heard, as it were, in my brain, the voices of the congregation, as they sang—

"In Judah's land God is well known,
His name in Israel's great,
In Salem is his tabernacle,
In Zion is his seat."

After this, there came on me silence and darkness, I having gradually fallen into a fit or trance.

I was roused by rude shocks and pulls, and a confused clamour of voices. Opening my eyes with effort, I saw surging upon the broken water, close to the spars, a ship's boat with men, one of whom—he who rowed the bow oar—had grasped the collar of my sea doublet, and was hauling me into the pinnace, in which effort he succeeded, ere I could well make out whereabouts I was. At the same time several voices asked, in two different languages, what was my name and country, and how I came there. Now, of both of these tongues I had some smattering, the one being French and the other Low Dutch, of which I had heard and picked up somewhat in my several voyages up the river Scheldt to Antwerp.

I therefore, trying to muster my senses, replied truthfully that my name was Leonard Lindsay—that I was a Scotsman, a mariner of the ship *Golden Grove*, of Leith, wherefrom I had fallen overboard, the spar to which I clung having been, as, indeed, they might perceive, blown away in tempestuous weather.

At this they consulted in a low tone amongst themselves. They were all seafaring men, mostly very swarthy, and tanned by the sun and the wind. They wore long black hair, and silver and gold earrings, which glanced amid their greasy curls. Only two were fair and blue-eyed—namely, the men who first addressed me in Flemish or Dutch. After remaining for a brief time beside the spars, and seeming to consult as to whether they were worthy to be made a prize of, they decided in the negative, and dipping their oars into the water, rowed away, the steersman narrowly watching the run of the seas, so as to avoid being broached to and swamped. In the meantime, I had clambered from the bottom of the boat, and looking over the bows, saw, not more than a third of a mile from us, a bark, which appeared to be both small and frail to contend with such a sea. The manner of her rig was new and strange to me, for she carried two masts, both very stout and short, and above them were two great supple yards, upon which was spread a good show of canvas, each sail being of that triangular form, called by the seamen who use them, lateen. In fine, the ship belonged to a port on the Mediterranean coast of France, and was of the class named feluccas.

It was necessary to approach the vessel with great caution, inasmuch as she rolled and surged

excessively. We therefore came slowly up, under her lee-quarter, and a man, of very dark complexion and the fieriest eyes I ever saw, jumped up upon the gunwale, and hailed the boat in French, but talking so rapidly, that I could make nothing of it. Then, a line having been thrown on board, it was made fast to me, and without more ado, I was soused into the sea, and dragged on board the felucca, where I lay panting on the deck, while the crew—very wild and fierce-looking sailors—amused themselves with my wretched appearance. Presently, however, the man who had hailed the boat, and who seemed to have great authority on board, came up to me, and putting the rest aside, said more deliberately than before, but still in French, and with a peculiar accent—

“ You are not, then, a Spaniard?”

I mustered my few words of French, and answered, that—“ I was not, but a Scotsman.”

Without more ado, he stooped over me, and searched my pockets. They contained some small English coins, being groats and silver pennies, and also a letter, which Captain Swanson, of the Jean Livingstone, had written to me to Leith. The sight of these things appeared to satisfy his doubts, for he spoke a few words in a kinder tone to those about him, and presently leaving me, a man dressed in a tarnished livery, like a

lackey, brought me a great cup of hot distilled waters, which I greedily swallowed, and found myself comforted and refreshed. Being, however, much exhausted from the length of time which I had passed in the water, I laid me down upon a heap of sails in the fore-castle, and being taken but little notice of, thanked God, inwardly, for my deliverance, and began to drop off to sleep. Only beforehand, like a sailor, I observed the course of the ship. The wind being westerly, and she being close-hauled, and labouring heavily to windward, I deemed, and with truth, that her destination must be across the Atlantic. But whithersoever she went, with my then feelings, mattered little; I was saved from an early death, and, grateful for my escape, I fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

When I wakened it was dark night, and the first watch was set. As the wind, however, was now very steady, and the sea not only lower but regular, the men were mostly lying and dosing about the deck, except he that conned and he that steered. Seeing me stirring, a sailor presently came to me with a lantern in his hand, and, to my great joy addressed me in English, asking me from whence I came, and the particulars of my disaster. Having shortly informed him, I requested that he would tell me what the ship was, which had rescued me, and what manner of

treatment I might expect at the hands of the captain and crew. At first, he made as if he would put off talking of these matters, but as I was importunate, he asked me in turn, whether I had not heard of the great association of men of all nations, but principally Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Hollanders, who carried on a constant warfare with the Spaniards among the islands of the West Indies, and along the coast of Darien, sometimes even crossing that narrow neck of land, and descending with fire and sword upon Panama and other towns of the South Sea. To this I replied, that certainly I had heard of these companies, but only very partially and nothing distinctly, that they were, I supposed, the adventurers called Flibustiers or Buccaneers, and more anciently the "Brethren of the Coast." My new friend made answer moodily, that I should most probably have ample means of learning more of these Freebooters ere I put my foot on British ground again—"That is," says he, "after you have either escaped or served your time."

These phrases naturally threw me into great trouble, and I earnestly asked what he signified by them.

"Why," he replied, "that you will be sold as an apprentice, or in other words, as a slave to the French West India Company, in the Isle of

Tortugas, on the northern coast of Hispaniola, whither we are bound."

At these words I grew sick at heart. "Better," I said, "to have allowed me drown in that sea than to have rescued me only to sell me into slavery."

"Not so," answered my companion, something sternly. "You are young, and have a thousand hopes before you. The Hand that miraculously preserved you this day, is ever stretched out in wisdom and mercy, readier to help than to chastise."

At this I could not avoid looking steadfastly at my Englishman; such phrases being little apt to fall from the lips of sailors. By the light of the lantern, I saw that he was a tall and stout old man, with something of great grandeur, as I thought, in his high brow and serene eyes. He could not have been much younger than sixty-five, but he was still a very strong great man, with a presence and bearing not like those of a wild sailor who has lived, as I may say, all his life with his hands in the tar-bucket. After some pause he went on to inform me, that besides himself there was no Englishman amongst the crew, and that he counted upon being safely put ashore at Tortugas, from whence he could get to Jamaica; for, as he said, he was not unknown to the hunters and privateers who frequented the former island. In reply to

my entreaties, that he would endeavour to take me with him, he said it was not possible; for although the captain might consent, yet that many of the crew were greedy low fellows, who would not render up a marevedi of the profits, to which, by the articles of the voyage, it seems that they were all in some sort and in different proportions entitled.

“But be thankful,” said my comrade, “that you are not a Spaniard; for had you but a drop of the blood of that people in your veins, a speedy death would be the best fate you could hope for on board a ship commanded by Louis Montbars.”

“Why,” said I, “is he so inveterate against the people of Spain?”

“I find,” returned the Englishman, “that you do indeed know little of the adventurers of the West Indies, if you have never heard of one of the most noted captains of them all. He is a gentleman of good birth, of Languedoc in France. In his early manhood, having taken great interest in reading various relations of the barbarities committed by the Spaniards upon the ancient and inoffensive Indians, the inhabitants of the islands, and the main discovered by Christopher Columbus and his coadjutors and successors, Montbars, being, like many in the South of France, a man of warm and fierce passions and feelings, made a solemn vow to God and the Virgin, that

the whole of his future life should be devoted to the task of revenging upon every Spaniard who might be placed in his power the injuries received at the hands of their fathers, alike by the fierce Charibs of the islands, and the gentle Peruvians of the main. To this intent, he spent all his patrimony in fitting out a ship, in which he sailed to the West Indies, and speedily made his name so famous, and so terrible to the Spaniards, that they call him in their language, 'The Extreminator,' and know that they can hope for not one moment's life after they come into his power. In general," pursued my informant, "he is grave, staid, and courteous, unless his mind run upon what I cannot but think the sort of bloody madness wherewith he is afflicted. And then, indeed, and more especially when in action with the Spaniards, he demeans himself more like a raging demon than a Christian man. He has lately had occasion to visit his native land, and I being also in Paris on my own business, and hearing that he proposed to set forth again, joined him as a mariner, but to be put ashore after the voyage at the Island of Tortugas."

This was the substance of our conversation that night. After which the quarter-master came to me, and saying, he understood that I had been a fisherman in my youth, and so must needs know how to make nets; and that they were in want of some

seine nets for use in the keys or small islands of the Indies, I might therefore, by making them, pay my passage. To this arrangement I very willingly acceded, and the next day had a hammock assigned to me, and set about my task of net-making, which was pleasant enough, pursued in fine weather upon the deck ; although, indeed, my heart was heavy and sore with thinking of what was before me.

I soon discovered that my Englishman's appellation, by which he was known, was Richard Wright, although that was not, indeed, as I afterwards found, his proper name. The crew were now reasonably kind to me, and the more so because Wright, whom they seemed to respect, took me in some sort under his protection, and upon the whole I found myself not ill off. The Captain mixed very familiarly with the men, as is common on board of privateers, and sometimes he would recite to them tales of the cruelties of the Spaniards to the Indians ; how in Hispaniola the numbers of these latter were reduced in fifteen years from a million to sixty thousand ; how the Spaniards worked them to a miserable death in the gold mines, or hunted them with blood-hounds through the mountains, feeding the dogs only upon the victim's flesh ; how the Spaniards would often kill these miserable people for mere diversion, or for wagers, or to keep their hands

in, as they called it; and how many of these white savages had made a vow—ay, and kept it—that, for a certain time, they would destroy thirteen Indians every morning before breakfast, in honour of our Saviour and the twelve apostles! With such relations, and all of them I believe to be true, would Montbars seek to stir up the deadly wrath of the ship's company against the Spaniards. But, in truth, this was a flame which required but little fanning, it being my opinion that had the Spaniards behaved like angels rather than demons, still the great body of ordinary Buccaneers would be content to treat them as the latter, so long as they possessed fair towns and rich mines ashore, and many treasure ships and galleons at sea. Notwithstanding, however, it must be confessed that there never being a nation more proud, cruel, and arrogant than these Spanish—at least, in all that refers to their American dominions—so there never was a people more justly to be despoiled of their ill-gotten gains.

But these are considerations apart from my narrative. Our voyage was reasonably prosperous, the west wind having soon given place to more favourable breezes, and at length, but not until after many teasing calms, which delayed our progress, the first welcome fannings of the trade wind caught our sails, and we glided swiftly towards the setting sun, over the great heaving

ocean swells and undulations, from whose shining sides flying fishes would leap briskly forth, and within which, the water being wondrously clear, we usually saw, on looking over the low bulwarks of the bark, swift dolphins, which swam round and round us, even when our ship was sailing three leagues an hour, and many smaller fishes, one individual of which, called by sailors a bonetta, about a foot long and of a reddish colour, swam for three days and three nights, just before our cutwater, so that the men began, as it were, to know that fish, and used to feed it with crumbs from the end of the bowsprit.

About the 6th of June, the weather being then very hot, with light breezes, we crossed the line, as it is called, not of course the true equator or equinox, but the tropic of Cancer. This was, according to the custom of the sea, a great festival on board, those who had not passed that way before being obliged to submit to the ceremony of baptism, as they call it, which was performed after the manner then in use amongst French ships, as follows:—

The master's mate dressed himself in a strange sort of garment, fashioned so as to be ridiculous and burlesque and reaching to his heels, with a hat or cap made to match. In his right hand he held a great clumsy wooden sword; in his left a pot of ink. His face he had besmirched with

soot, and he wore an uncouth necklace made of strings of blocks or pulleys, such as are used in the rigging for ropes to pass through. Thus accoutred, all the novices knelt down before him, while he favoured the shoulders of each with a smart slap of the sword, smearing also a great cross upon his brows, or sometimes over all his face with the ink. Immediately after, the novice was drenched with dozens of buckets of water, and the ceremony ended by his depositing his offering, as they call it, of a bottle of brandy, which must be placed in perfect silence at the foot of the mainmast. For myself, I underwent the mummery with the rest, and had, fortunately, sufficient in my pocket to contribute my bottle of brandy. One of the Hollanders on board told me that their mode of baptism was different; they either insisting upon a ransom, according to the station of the novice, or hoisting him to the mainyard and from thence dropping him into the sea three several times. "If, however," said my informant, a simple man, "he be hoisted a fourth time in name of the Prince of Orange or of the master of the vessel, his honour is reckoned more than ordinary." In case of the ship—I speak still of the Hollanders—never having passed that place before, the captain is bound to give the mariners a small runlet of wine, which if he neglect to do, they maintain that they may cut the stem off the

vessel. But in French and in Dutch ships, the profits accruing from the ceremony are kept by the master's mate, and spent upon the arrival in port, in a general debauch by all the seamen.

CHAPTER II.

OF MY ESCAPE FROM THE FRENCH SHIP, AND MY
LANDING IN HISPANIOLA.

AND now, being fairly within the grasp of the trade wind, we sped swiftly on towards those western islands whither we were bound, experiencing, however, as we approached the Indies, some of the squally weather common in these latitudes. Such gusts soon blow over, but are troublesome and fatiguing to mariners, and wearing to ship and rigging. First comes a black cloud on the horizon, then the waves to windward become tipped with whitish foam. Presently the gust strikes with great force, the firmament being very dark and threatening; at the time of its greatest strength there will be a flash of lightning and a thunder clap or two, after which a pelt of rain and a sudden clearing of the sky, the squall being for that time over.

Meanwhile, I often discussed with Wright the question of my deliverance. He said that there was now so much jealousy between the French and the English, in the West Indies, that I could possibly look for no other fate than being sold to serve my time as a slave in Tortugas, where I would be employed in field labour, such as the cultivation of tobacco, great crops of which are grown in that island. Wright's opinion was, that I ought, in some way or other, to attempt an escape before being landed at Tortugas; but this was easier talked of than done. While all was still unsettled between us, "Land" was one day proclaimed from the mast-head. This announcement surprised us all, for we had not expected to see any land until we came in sight of the mountains of Hispaniola, which still lay well to the westward. However, we soon found that, either through currents or errors in the reckoning, we were further to the south than we had calculated, and that the island we saw was one of the Virgin Isles, forming a cluster just where the long line of windward islands which stretch northward from the mainland, trend away to the west. This discovery necessitated a change in our steering—we hauling up two or three points more to the northward. The next day we saw, at a very great distance to leeward, a long faint blue ridge rising out of the water, which was the mountain line of the high

ground of Porto Rico. Towards evening, the trade wind abated, being influenced, as we conjectured, by the distant land-breeze, which blows at night off the shore, in and near these islands; and before the setting of the sun the weather grew well nigh calm. It was then that one of the crew discovered a bottle floating not far from the felucca, and pointed it out to the Captain, who straightway commanded it to be brought aboard; inasmuch as mariners in distress often fling such into the sea, with letters and papers relating their sad condition. Now, on board the felucca were two boats—the pinnace, in which I had been rescued, and a little skiff, not bigger than a canoe, which, being hoisted out and manned by two hands, brought in the bottle. It turned out to be empty, and of no account. Still the finding of it was a lucky accident for me, inasmuch as the skiff was not again hoisted on board, but—the weather being exceedingly fine, and we soon expecting to use her to help in mooring ship—left towing astern.

That same night, Wright came to me and pointed her out as a means of escape.

“Look you,” says he, “your business is to get ashore on some island where you will find Englishmen, and which is not entirely under French or Spanish influence. Now, on the coast of Hispaniola are not a few of your countrymen

and mine, sometimes cruising, sometimes hunting and slaughtering cattle. By the course we are now lying, we shall have to run all along the northern coast of Hispaniola, which we will probably approach close to, for the benefit of the land breeze at night, and because the shore is bold and the sea deep. Provided the skiff be left towing astern, it will not be difficult for you to smuggle yourself into it in the night-time, and so escape ashore."

This advice appeared to me admirable, and threw me quite into a fever of eagerness and anxiety. I was in the middle watch that night, and how often I gazed upon the little boat—the expected ark of my deliverance—as she tossed upon the smooth ridges of swell, which glanced like silver in the bright moonlight. About nine o'clock in the morning the trade wind resumed its powers, and we soon saw rising out of the ocean, upon our lee bow, the blue-peaked mountains of Hispaniola. All day, you may be sure, I very eagerly watched the weather, fearing lest the approach of a squall would cause Montbars to order the skiff to be taken on deck, but the sky continued quite cloudless, the sun was burning hot, and the sea-breeze—for such amid the Western Indies they call the regular daily trade wind—blew most refreshingly upon our starboard quarter, urging the felucca gloriously along. We were

now fast closing in with the coast, which stretched in a long high range under the lee; and as we approached an exceeding bold promontory, called Le Vieux Cap François, I saw how delicious was the land, with its bright green forests—its rocks, rising from thick bushes and brushwood—and the great blue mountain peaks in the distance. Besides ourselves the ocean was solitary. No sail scudded before the breeze—no fishing-boat rode head to sea, surrounded by the buoys of her nets and lines. All above was a sky of dazzling and lustrous brightness—beneath was a limpid and foaming sea, from which arose the groves and rocks, the deep ravines and the green savannahs of an isle which seemed Paradise. I stood in the bows of the felucca, and stretched forth my arms, and prayed for the moment when I should set foot on shore.

When I was in this kind of rapture, Wright came to me privately, and asked whether I was determined to make the attempt. I replied, I only longed for night to come. Then at his request I went below with him to his berth, when he showed me, all else being on deck, a short barrelled musket hid in the bedding, with a flask of fine glazed powder and a small bag of balls. There was also a leathern bottle, called a broc, well stoppered and full of water, and some biscuits. “These things,” says he, “will be neces-

sary for you, so that you may not want, until you pick up some comrade along shore. Should you not succeed at first, you must trust to your gun for food, and you will soon find water, of which there is abundance, fresh and clear."

I thanked him heartily for his goodness and foresight, for I had thought of nothing but how I should get ashore, not even how I should satisfy my hunger and thirst when I landed. But Wright was my good genius, and, taking advantage of our being now alone, for the deck was so much the more pleasant that all were there, he made me put on a couple of stout linen shirts which he gave me, as also a good jacket, such as sailors wear, and a pair of strong yet light shoes, like pumps. I was quite overpowered with such goodness, and could scarce refrain from weeping. What a poor forlorn miserable creature I should have been had Wright not been on board; and although I was nothing to him, yet had I been his son, the old man could not have used me with more grave and simple kindness. I told him that when he first spoke to me I was in great desolation and despair of spirit, but that now my heart was cheery and buoyant, and that I well trusted to see my own land again. At this his face darkened, and he heaved a great sigh. I went on, and said, that he, too, I hoped, would end his days, not in these burning climes, but in the

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE YEAR

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

dissemble, that if I am an outcast, it is in a holy and a just cause — ay, and a cause which will triumph, when the blood of the saints which crieth aloud is justified and avenged. Leonard Lindsay, I am one of those who by voice and hand did to death the man Charles Stuart !”

This, then, was one of the regicides whom I had often heard were wandering about the world, being driven from their land by this great and justifiable deed, for so my parents taught me to esteem it, of the putting to death of the king. I would have told my friend somewhat to this effect, but he stopped me, saying, applause or disapprobation were alike to him ; that he would help and comfort all his fellow men, but that he cared not for their opinion on what he had done, always looking for judgment inwards to his own soul, and thence upwards to his God.

Shortly after this we went on deck, and my first glance was astern, where the skiff was still towing, although the waves raised by the sea-breeze ran so gaily, that sometimes as they chased us, the boat rising on the crest of the following sea, would seem as though she would be hove bodily on deck. The land was now quite close, not more than a mile under the lee, so that we could see a great succession of bays and little headlands, with bushes of many sorts, and rich tangled underwood, creeping among and clothing

the knolls and banks even to the water's edge. Over these, high palms bended and waved in the sea breeze, these seeming to issue from every crevice in the rocks, and sometimes, where a rivulet came down unto the sea, the banks thereof being flat and soft, grew great thickets of the mangrove bush, a shrub which rises on bare grey stems out of the water, supporting whole beds of tangled and intertwisting foliage above, thus raising, as it were, a sort of canopy above the water. Between such places and the rocky headlands were often little bays, with narrow strips of white glittering beach running like crescents from cliff to cliff, the sea breaking in flashing surf upon the shingle, and often sending its spray pelting among the bushes. Never, indeed, had I seen a more glorious coast, one so teeming with beauty and the riches of an overflowing nature. Involuntarily after every long and ardent gaze I turned my eyes upon my skiff, praying within my heart that nought might come to make my adventure miscarry.

As the evening approached, I was so impatient that I disposed of the biscuits, the powder, and the ball about my person; and was for ever going below to the berth to see that the musket was safe. The mariners, however, being excited and joyful, that the end of the voyage was nigh, gave little heed to me, otherwise my continued move-

ments and feverish demeanour could not have but raised suspicion. In those low latitudes there is but little twilight, and half an hour after the sun went down into the sea ahead of us, the stars were shining out through the night. Meantime the sea-breeze had died away, and for an hour or longer we were left heaving upon the glassy swell, the land showing in vast dusky masses, which, as it were, cut great spaces out of the firmament twinkling with stars, and the roar of the surf coming heavy and loud over the sea. Presently, after divers faint puffs, which caused the canvas to flap, shaking down on the deck great showers of dew, the land-wind, or *terral*, arose in its turn, balmy and sweet with the smell of the forests, and our lateen sails being dipped we glided along, leaning over to seaward. The mid-watch came at last, and it had not been set for more than half an hour, ere the men dropped to sleep, under the lee of the bulwarks, excepting the steersman, and he leaned heavily and drowsily over the tiller. Then I brought on deck the musket and the broc, depositing them in safe places. But the question was how to get on board the skiff so as to elude the notice of the sailor who steered. Having soon devised a plan, I communicated it to Wright, who did not hesitate to put it into execution. Going aft, he stood beside the helmsman, and after some time, looking

astern, remarked how the land-wind broke the usual heave of the sea into wild disorderly waves, and then observing, that the skiff might be injured by being flung under our counter, by the jumble of the water, he took the rope and hauled the boat ahead—the steersman thinking no harm, until he made it fast alongside, and screened from sight by the mainsail. In five minutes after, with a strong gripe of the hand, and a fervent “God speed you,” I swung myself noiselessly aboard, and placed the gun and the broc in the bottom of the boat. Wright, so I must still call him, then undid the rope. My hand was, at that moment, upon the smooth side of the felucca, which I suddenly felt slip by me; I was adrift! Holding my breath, and my hand still against the planking of the vessel, she glided fast and faster by me, eluding as it were my clutch, when her shape melted away into the run. A minute after and I saw the small dusky hull, and white stretching canvas becoming indistinct in the darkness ahead. I was alone, but I was free. For near an hour I remained almost motionless, fearing every moment to hear an alarum-gun fire, but the night continued silent, and then with a good heart I took up my oars, and using two as sculls, rowed towards the coast. The land-breeze blew steadily, so I had to tug long and hard. At last, seeing the dusky bank close ahead, I paused to look for a landing-

place, but none could I see. The nature of the coast seemed to have changed, the land hereabout being a long, smooth wall of perpendicular rock, sinking sheerly into the sea, which rose and fell at the base, with a loud hissing, pouring, gurgling sound—not like the deep thunder of surf. I therefore set myself to pull eastwardly, in search of a creek or bay. I knew that the moon would presently rise over the land, and in sooth, in about an hour, I noted the glow of her broad disk, peeping over the edge of the cliff ahead of me, and showing it, fringed, as it were, with a line of bushes and brushwood, which curled over the precipice, surmounted now and then by one of the tall, bending palmetto trees. In about an hour I had moonlight sufficient to see pretty distinctly the great limestone ledges along which I was cautiously coasting—pausing on my oars, now and then, to hear the great buzz of insects and the forlorn cries of night-birds which floated from the land. It must have been near three o'clock, when I saw a black-like opening in the wall of cliff, and very cautiously I pulled my boat inwards. For some time I was in great doubt, as to whether I had found a creek, but presently I beheld the two portals of rock between which I was, fairly astern of the boat, and saw and heard the white gleam of the surf breaking on the beach. But the former was too high for me to risk a landing,

and I would have pulled out to sea again, but seeing another dark shadowy space upon the left, I made for it, hoping it might turn out an oblique channel leading from the main cove. I was not deceived, and presently the boat glided along a sort of dusky canal, with great rocks on either hand, clothed with rich creeping herbage; trees hanging over either ledge, and, as the channel narrowed, meeting, and by their intertwining boughs shutting out the blue sky. Below me the water showed as black as tar, yet sparkling, when the undulations from the outer creek caused it to rise and sink upon the bushy banks. Now and then a flutter of wings would echo in the narrow passage, and the loud shriek of a night-bird would drown the noise. Anon a scrambling, walloping sound, followed by a splash, as of a great animal scuttling from a ledge into the water, would ensue, and again, for a time, there would be deep silence. In about a quarter of an hour, the heave of the sea was no longer felt, owing as I concluded to the shallowing of the creek; and then, making fast the skiff to a great protruding branch, which I struck my head against, I rolled myself in a blanket which I found Wright had flung into the boat, and was soon asleep, being thus, as it were, safely anchored to the New World!

CHAPTER III.

I JOIN A BROTHERHOOD OF HUNTERS AND ADVENTURERS
ON THE COAST.

I DID not wake until the sun was reasonably high, although but few rays found their way into the curious cove which by such a lucky chance I had hit. It was, indeed, a sort of natural corridor or aisle; rocks covered with plants and bushes forming great green walls, with tangled trees bending from side to side, and meeting and interlacing above, like a roof, while the floor was limpid water. The air within this natural alcove was of a greenish hue, and the reflection from the water the same. Great numbers of gay-coloured birds fluttered and screamed, rather than sang, amid the boughs; and on almost every projecting stone by the edge of the water stood a great grey crane or heron, watching for the small fish which form its prey. After I had looked my fill, I began to think of

breakfast ; for, in order to eke out my store, I had gone supperless to bed. So I munched a couple of biscuits, and took a great pull at the sweet, fresh water. There were fruits and vegetables of many kinds growing near, which I feared to meddle with, not knowing their properties. After breakfast, I cast off from my bough, and paddled to and fro in the channel to seek a landing-place. This I was not long in discovering, at the spot where a little runnel of the most transparent water I ever saw in my life came trickling down in a small hollow, or what, in Scotland, we would call a *scaur*. The sides of the ravine were, it is true, very steep, but they were clothed with matted grass and vegetation, so that I could clamber up without much difficulty. I therefore made my boat fast very carefully, for I knew not what use she might be to me afterwards, and also loaded my gun and hammered the flint, after which I addressed myself to climb to the top of the bank. I found this tolerably hard work ; the heat of the sun was excessive, and here there was no sea breeze to refresh one. Moreover, I did not much like the infinity of creeping and crawling things which, as I made my way upwards, I startled amid the coarse grass and underwood. Great beetles, shining and speckled—writhing creatures, like grey worms, with numberless legs—horrible hairy spiders—and one or two small snakes, all

mottled and brindled. Besides, there flew about me, making a tiny buzz, as if they blew small airy trumpets, hosts of that accursed fly called by the French, *maranguinnes*, and by the English, mosquitoes, which stung me until I was almost mad, —slapping my face and my hands, and thrashing the air with a leafy branch, but all in vain. At length, after great toil, I stood upon the top of the bank, and felt, to my joy, the cool blast of the strong sea-breeze, which rustled in the bushes, and soon blew away my insect enemies far to leeward. Then, mounting a moderate sized eminence, I set myself to reconnoitre; and truly I might have deemed that I was in a desert and unpeopled land. Behind me rose great swelling ridges, extending above one another as far as my eye could reach, and all covered with bright green brushwood, with here and there one of the long feathery palm-trees standing up like a steeple over houses. Not many paces in front ran a long fringe, as it were, of waving trees and bushes, marking the extreme edge of the cliff, which sank into the ocean; while beyond this there stretched out the great blue expanse of the sea, speckled here and there with white as the waves broke, but sailless, and as lonely as the land. The great mountains which we had seen from on board were here invisible, and even the ridges around, as I gazed on them, seemed to move and quiver in

the great heat. Notwithstanding, pretty humming-birds, less than Jenny Wrens, fluttered about, and there was a mighty chattering, as of armies of parrots and parroquets, which whooped and called to each other from grove to grove.

At first, I felt a kind of sinking at being alone in this great wilderness, but plucking up courage, I set off to trudge along the coast to the eastward. The journey was toilsome in the extreme, for the stunted shrubs were tangled so, that I was oftentimes compelled to cut a passage with my clasp knife, and the heat made my temples throb and ache strangely. At length, seeing great trees of prodigious size, the skirts of a forest, on my right hand, I made for them, and entering their shade, found better walking, for here was a canopy of leaves which warded off the sun, and also prevented the growth of underwood, the ground being clear, and the air cool, between the vast trunks of these glorious trees. However, I kept upon the edge of the wood, for fear of losing myself, not designing to stray far from the sea. Having marched thus near two hours, I heard a noise which, as I came nearer, I took to be the yellings of wild animals; so that, somewhat startled, I looked to the priming of my gun, and also gazed around for a tree into which it might be convenient to climb. Meantime, the tumult came nearer, and I imagined it to be of dogs, yet it was rather a

savage yelping, than the deep bay of hounds. Next, I heard a great crashing of branches on the edge of the wood, and making my way there, and mounting a tree, I speedily saw a huge wild boar, as I judged, with great tusks, and his jaws covered with flakes of foam, closely chased by a pack of dogs. These latter were fawn coloured, with black muzzles; their legs were short, but very brawny, and as I heard no sound or shout of hunters, I concluded, with reason, that the pack before me were the descendants of those ferocious bloodhounds brought by the Spaniards into Hispaniola, and other islands, to hunt down the in-offensive Indians, and which, being deserted by their masters, ran wild and multiplied, so that flocks of them assemble, and hunt the cattle and boars for their own support. Meantime, however, the quarry had turned to bay underneath a tree not far from me, and the dogs stood round in a semicircle, yelping at him. At length, one bolder than the rest made a spring, and drove its great jaws, as it seemed to me, into the animal's flank. This was the signal for a general onset, and, in a moment, the boar, grunting and squeeling hideously, was tumbled on the ground, the ferocious dogs, with jaws and muzzles all blood and froth, tearing and riving its living flesh, so that, in the space of very few minutes, the creature was not only killed, but well-nigh pulled into morsels.

Then the dogs, several of which were hurt, and limped and whined, fell to and ate their fill, after which, having gorged themselves to their very throats, they lay down to sleep. Seeing this, I concluded that I could with safety pursue my journey, and accordingly got down from the tree and did so, none of the bloodhounds molesting me.

I walked until the afternoon, still seeing no sign of human life, and then feeling very hungry, and moreover wishing for something more savoury than bread and water, I looked about for game. Many green lizards or guanos were to be seen in the branches, and these the Frenchmen on board the felucca had assured me were good food, but I could not bring my stomach to them, and at length, after several unsuccessful shots, I secured a bird, nearly double the size of our pigeon, on which I determined to dine. Coming to a little rivulet of clear water, with pretty pools, nourishing the most luscious profusion of water-plants, I sat me down, and presently discovered a large duck quackling and nibbling in the herbage. Now, the flesh of a duck I knew, but the bird I had already killed was a stranger to me; so taking a very careful aim at the poor fellow I fired and sent the bullet—I had no small shot—right through him. But immediately there rose such a loud rustling of wings, and quacking, and

screaming, that I was confounded, until, making a few steps in advance, I saw that the rivulet a little above spread into a good sized weedy pond, which harboured thousands of ducks, and teal, and widgeon, all of which flew away on hearing the report of my piece. Having recovered my game from the water, I set to work, plucked him, and, kindling a fire of dry sticks and leaves, broiled him thereon. The cookery was rough, but I thought the fare capital, only the want of salt annoyed me. Having dined, I jogged on as before, and as evening approached found myself exceedingly fatigued and dispirited at having seen no human being. When the sun went down and the short tropical twilight gave way to night, through which the stars blazed with a fiery lustre, unknown to me until I had crossed the Atlantic, I even began to ponder as to whether I had done well in leaving the ship at all; but speedily shaking off this idle despondency, I wrapped myself up in my blanket, which, in spite of its weight, I had carried strapped tightly on my shoulders, and seasoning my biscuit with a piece of tobacco to chew, made my supper, and slept in the fork of a tree, lying back not uncomfortably among the branches. I awoke once or twice and listened to the low hum and drone of insects, in addition to which a bird, as I judged, uttered from time to time a long mournful cry, sounding like "Weep, poor weel," which was very

melancholy, echoing through that great midnight wilderness. Around me gleamed the little lights of glow-worms, called by the Spaniards *Moscas del Fuego*. But these extinguished their lamps in the latter part of the night.

I was awake with the sun, at the rising of which, a great white fog which lay upon the earth and drenched me, lifted and dispersed. The heat soon dried my clothes, and about nine o'clock when the sea-breeze whistled through the herbage, I began again my weary march. Not long after, having a good view of the sea from a promontory, I descried almost beneath me, a ship under sail, lying along shore, which, the coast here tending southerly, she could do very well, and yet keep her sails full. She was a two masted vessel, seemingly very quick, and, plunging over the breasting waves gallantly, soon passed me, steering to the east and keeping fearlessly along the rocks. I found no wild ducks to-day, but urged by hunger I shot a monkey; and although the poor creature looked horrible when skinned, his flesh was not unpalatable. Towards the afternoon, I perceived that I was approaching an indented part of the coast, and I saw many ravines down which I could have gone to the sea. Now and then, too, I would get a glimpse of such pretty, shingly and bushy bays as I descried from the felucca, while on the other hand, between the

hills, there opened up vistas of great flat green fields, here called savannahs. I had hopes that I was approaching some inhabited place, and ere long I heard faint shouts before me and nearer to the sea. This made me push on vigorously, yet not without caution; and at length, forcing my way through a forest of stunted trees, I caught a glimpse of the figure of a man through the boughs. His back was to me, and I thought he was standing in a low tree, when suddenly a great gust of the sea-breeze came rattling in the wood, and the man swang to and fro with a slow motion, among the waving branches. Immediately a horrid thought seized me, and looking up as I heard a croaking, I saw two great carrion vultures circling in the air. Manning myself I ran forward, and there sure enough was the body of a man hanging from a horizontal branch of a tree, his feet not many inches from the tops of the Guinea grass. I was overpowered with horror; but turning away from the terrible sight, what were my feelings to see two other bodies hanging in a similar manner! Having a little recovered my first natural fright, I looked attentively at these unfortunates. They were all three dressed in the same fashion, with coarse shirts, great jackets or doublets, cut in a square fashion, like the coats of the watermen on the Thames, and pantaloons. What surprised me, however, was the red filthy

hue of the garments, as though they had been soaked in blood and never cleaned or scoured. But then I called to mind what Wright had told me of the hunting dresses of the Buccaneers, and how they took a sort of pride in being disorderly and neglectful of their attire, never washing it from the blood-stains, which their occupation plenteously bedaubed them with. The hair and beards of these men were long and matted, and they wore buskins of untanned hide. I looked attentively, but could see no gun or weapon, and the whole matter was a mystery to me. However, it was not a pleasant locality to linger in, so I continued my way, and presently saw a fine wooded bay, with winding shores lying beneath me, the forest sometimes reaching into the very surf; but in other places leaving beaches of sand, carpeted as it were with a sort of creeping grass of the kind, as I afterwards heard, called Bahama.

Along this bay I skirted, often stopping to look keenly about. At length, I saw a boat or canoe, pulled by several persons, paddling across the smooth surface; and, observing it disappear beyond a green headland on the opposite side of the bay, my attention was directed thither, and presently I noticed several columns of thin blue smoke rising up above the trees at that very point. I was still gazing at them when the sound of voices smote my ear distinctly, and I had scarce time to

conceal myself among the thick brushwood, when near a score of men, some of whom wore gold-laced doublets, and seemed officers, came scrambling down towards the water from a point higher up the bay than I had attained. I saw at a glance that they were not Englishmen, being much too swarthy ; and, as they passed at no great distance, and talked and laughed loudly, I perceived that their language was Spanish, the sound and accent whereof I knew very well. All these men were armed, each with a great bell-mouthed short barrell'd gun, but I observed that three carried, each of them, in addition, a musket of quite another shape. Seeing that they were Spaniards, I was in mortal dread that they might have bloodhounds with them, fiercer even than the wild dogs I had seen, and I drew my strong clasp knife, determined that, at least, there should be a weasen or so cut before I was worried. Happily, however, the party had no dogs whatever. I held my breath as they were passing, but what was my consternation when the whole body stopped not ten paces from me, while one pointed out to the others the smoke on the other side of the bay. At this, two or three other of the fellows made gestures, by jerking their heads aside and pointing to their necks, as though there were halters round them, and then all laughed. But he who seemed the principal officer restrained

them, and taking out a pocket compass, appeared to set, as mariners call it, the direction in which the smoke appeared. Then they all went on together, I cautiously following at a very respectful distance. Their course was to the outer part of the bay, and they proceeded hastily down a steep wooded glen, in which I lost sight of them. Presently, however, I heard them hailing a ship, as I conjectured; and I was right, for having got a little further, I heard the ripple of water, and saw over the trees the rigging and masts of a vessel, which I recognised as the same I had descried at sea early in the morning; and, getting a good vantage-ground, I at last looked down upon her deck, and saw a well-armed ship, full of men. Putting all these circumstances together, I soon concluded that the craft was a Spanish Guarda Costa. Then I thought of the men pointing to the distant smoke, and making motions as though they would hang the people there. In a moment I saw it all. The three executed Buccaneers—the three guns different from the rest carried by the Spaniards—their gestures at sight of the smoke of a little settlement! Doubtless the party belonged to a ship which had come upon the coast to make the usual attacks on the French and English settlers, and they, having caught these three unfortunates in the woods, had hanged them out of hand, and meant to attack the people on the

opposite side of the bay, taking them by surprise. This last I inferred from the care with which a sheltering cove had been found to conceal their vessel.

It was now my clear duty to make my way to the opposite side of the bay, to warn the people there, who, being enemies of the Spaniards, must necessarily, by the rule of these seas, be friends of mine. But how to get to them? I knew not how far up the country the bay, or lagoon, extended; to swim across would not have been difficult, but I thought of caymans and sharks, and my heart failed me. Notwithstanding, I made my way to the seaside, and sat down on a large rock. What would I have given now for the skiff I had abandoned! But then, if I had come along the coast in her, I should have been picked up and murdered by the *Guarda Costa*. So in cruel perplexity I sat until it grew dark. All at once I thought that if the three unhappy buccaneers who were put to death belonged to the settlement opposite, that they would have brought a canoe to waft them over, which I might find along the shore. This idea gave me fresh vigour, and I ran eagerly along the shingle, climbing from time to time over points of rock which jutted out. Near two hours were wasted in fruitless search, wading through little creeks, and tracing small channels amid the bushes into which the rising tide was flowing,

when at length, just as I was despairing, I happily found the object of my search. In a narrow cove, alongside a ledge of rock, floated a light canoe, scooped out of a single tree. I immediately stepped on board, and using the paddle alternately on either side, managed, though I was awkward at first, to make the canoe move in the direction I wished. Crossing the bay, I had enough to do to keep the land wind from blowing me out of my course, and by the time I was two-thirds over, every muscle in my body ached with the unwonted exercise. Paddling on, however, I suddenly saw on the dusky shore a cluster of red dim lights, by which I knew that I had opened the headland behind which the smoke rose, and almost at the same moment I heard behind a faint plash, and the rattle as of arms. I saw at once that I had no time to lose, if, as I guessed, the boats of the *Guarda Costa* were not far astern. Immediately I redoubled my efforts, making for the lights, and at the same time hailed, "Ho ! the shore, ahoy." Immediately a voice replied, "Is that you, Benjamin ?" When I heard the sounds of my own language, my heart leaped in my mouth ; and, catching up my musket, I fired it off, shouting, "Look out, look out ! the Spaniards ! the *Guarda Costas* !" In an instant there gleamed a great many little lights, as of lanterns carried by people running about on the beach, and I heard the clash

of arms and loud hallooings ; then the voice I had heard sang out again, "Where are they?—who are you?" But before I could reply the Spaniards suddenly fired two volleys in my direction, the flashes showing two great boats, full of men, and rowing fast. The water near me was torn up by the balls, but none touched the canoe, and the fire was promptly answered by a small piece of artillery ashore, which echoed grandly in the hills, and caused a harsh concert of the wakened birds. Not willing to be between two fires, I paddled hard, and presently ran the canoe on the beach ; when I leaped out and found myself in the midst of a group of men, all shouting and cheering in English and French, running to and fro, and fetching and making ready arms,—their muskets, and hangers, and pikeheads gleaming in the sparkle of the lanterns. Directly I splashed through the surf, I shouted that I was a friend and a Scottish sailor, and that the Spaniards were upon us ; whereon they gave a loud shout in my honour, and in defiance of the enemy, and fired a straggling volley. This the boats returned briskly, and the Buccaneers, rushing up to their middles in the sea, cried out with desperate imprecations to the Spaniards to come on, swearing they would roast them alive on their *grilles de bois*, and taunting them with every infamous name, keeping up a spattering irregular fire all the time. However,

Jack Spaniard, seeing a warm reception before him, hung off, keeping in the shadow of the little headland. Then two or three canoes were promptly manned, but the men in their eagerness over-crowded them, and fought amongst themselves who should go ; so that time was lost, and meantime we heard the dash of oars, as the boats, having failed in their purpose of surprise, pulled away.

When the hubbub was a little abated, I was asked by a dozen persons at once what I was, whereon I recounted that having left, I did not say escaped, from a French ship on the coast, I had travelled hither, and on my way saw the Spaniards, and guessed their intentions. Then I told them of the bodies I had passed hanging from trees, at which they raised a great clamour of cursing ; for these, as I had guessed, were their comrades, who had crossed the bay to hunt the day before. Then there was a proposal to man all the canoes, and go and attack the Spaniards ; but just as this was acceded to with a loud shout, a light pirogue, which it seems had been fishing down the bay, ran in with the news that the ship had weighed anchor directly her boats returned, and made all sail to sea. On this there was a great groan given for the cowardice of the Don, and the crowd began to disperse.

At this moment a young Englishman came up

to me, and asked, with great solicitude, if one of the Buccaneers I had seen hanging was light haired with yellow moustaches. I replied in the affirmative, on which, in words of strong passion and feeling, he swore that he would bitterly revenge on the Spaniards the death of Benjamin, his "partner," as he called him, and, in short, broke out into a great paroxysm of grief and rage. Meantime, several of the Buccaneers offered me the hospitality of their huts, but my Englishman declared I must go to his, as he was now alone, which the rest consenting to, very cordially shook hands with me, and thanked me in French and English, and then I followed my new friend along the beach to his hut. There were a good many of these, irregularly placed, and beside several there smouldered a slow fire, making the lights I had seen in the bay. Over these fires there were gratings or hurdles of wood, and on them lumps of beef, rudely out, drying and cooking little by little; great bales and heaps of hides lay about, the perfume exhaling from them not being by any means pleasant, and numbers of dogs howled and barked without ceasing. My conductor led me into a hut built like the others, of wood and clay, and thatched with some sort of thick leaf. The inside was lighted by a smoky lamp, showing two beds of hide with dirty blankets, and a clumsy table. There were shelves all

round, whereon were ranged several guns, hangers, and long Spanish knives, with fish and boar-spears, and other weapons. Also I saw a mariner's compass and some instruments for taking the latitude, so that I rightly guessed my host to be a sailor as well as a hunter. Besides these, there were strewn about, bits of net, canvas, bullock horns, and one or two panthers' skins were arranged as coverlets for the beds.

My host asked many questions about the Spaniards, while he produced for supper a piece of dried beef, prepared over the slow fire which I had seen, and which being called "boucan" gave to those who make it the name of "Buccaneers." I found it somewhat tough, but relishing and wholesome. After supper, we had brandy and rum, tempered by water, and while drinking it very sociably, my comrade informed me that he was a native of Cornwall, and that his name was Treveltham; but that here, following a custom which was universal among the Buccaneers, he had changed it for a nickname, or *nomme de guerre*, by which only he was known to the generality of his comrades. His Christian appellation being Nicholas, he was called Nicky Hamstring, a whimsical appellation, which set me laughing heartily. He had been on the coast since the end of the last rainy season, and liked the life well. The bay on the banks of which we were,

he told me, was the estuary of a river called Le Marmousette, and about it there were much wild cattle. The English and the French buccaneers lived here generally good friends. "Not but," said he, "that sometimes when the rum has gone round, there is not a brawl, and it may be a stick with a knife; but after all the island is big enough for all, and the cattle are many enough for all, and so we love each other, and hate Jack Spaniard." While we were talking, we heard loud shouting and singing without, great roaring choruses both in French and English, and oftentimes a *Lingua Franca*, which was a compound of the two, but the burden of all being words of hatred and contempt of the Spaniards. Once or twice I thought the singers would have entered our hut, for the door had neither lock nor bar, but they did not, and as the night wore on, everything became silent except the dogs, who, having been unloosed from their kennels to act as sentinels, growled hoarsely along the beach. Having drunk and talked as much as we chose, we went to bed, I having, indeed, been asleep all through several long stories which Nicky recounted of the exploits and bravery of the Buccaneers, my drowsiness being easily excused to my companion by the long journey I had come that day.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE LIFE OF A BUCCANEER.

NEXT morning Nicky asked me to accompany him, with two others to guide them to the spot where their comrades had suffered, in order that they might bury the bodies. We accordingly set off in the canoe, our companions being one Jonas, as he was called, an Englishman, and Pierre le Noir, or Black Peter, a Frenchman from the coast of Normandy. Jonas was so called, owing to the great ill luck which he had met with in cruising, having been twice taken, and once very nearly hanged by the Spaniards on the coast of Porto Rico; while once upon the Mosquito coast, in the expedition in which L'Olonais, a famous French Buccaneer, was killed, he had been left for some months in a small quay or island near the Mosquito shore, eating what wild fruit he could get, and what birds he could catch with his hands.

We landed in the same creek in which I found the canoe, and after less troublous walking than I expected, my comrades knowing the country, found the bodies still hanging, but already defaced by the hideous vultures, so as to present a horrid spectacle. Nevertheless, having brought shovels and pickaxes with us, we performed our task, and over the grave, for they all three were laid in one, we put a rude cross made of withies, or willow wands, and so left them to take their long sleep in the wilderness.

Being returned to the opposite side, I rambled through the village, for such it was, to note the appearance of the place, and its inhabitants.

The huts were built upon a green bank, rising pleasantly from the sea, the little headland of which I spoke sheltering it. Behind some lofty ridges, partly covered with luxuriant wood, which here and there had been cleared, certain small fields were marked out, these last being planted with a brown herb, like overgrown rhubarb, which they told me was tobacco. At the water's edge was a rude wharf, made of a wood called shingles—and several canoes and European built boats lay there. While I was sauntering about, one of the former put off navigated by two Indians, who spoke both French and English reasonably well. These Indians were better and more neatly attired than the whites; they were of a sallow-brown hue, had

long, lank, black hair, and very bright eyes. In person they were tall, raw-boned, and muscular. In the canoe they carried an assortment, as it were, of spears, called fizgigs and harpoons, for striking fish, at which exercise they are inconceivably expert, often killing in a forenoon what will form a good dinner for a hundred men. The Mosquito men, for so are these Indians called, are therefore very highly prized by the whites, who give them good wages to go on board their ships, or to stay at their settlements on shore, to provide turtle or manatee for the company. While I was looking at them, Nicky came up to me, and we walked through the village together, he bringing me into many of the cabins, all of which were similar to his own. Those of the men who were not in the mountains or savannahs hunting, were attending to their boucans, or fires, for the drying of the meat, and I thought as I saw them, working like butchers and cooks, that I would rather take the huntsman's part of the business. All around lay the quarters of slaughtered beeves and hogs, while the Buccaneers, armed with long knives, cut the flesh from the bones. These lumps were then carefully salted in open sheds used for that purpose, and after being well steeped in brine, were placed on the boucan—that is to say, upon the grille of wood above a slow fire, which gradually dried and

cooked the meat, giving it at the same time a sort of smoky taste, which however is not without an aroma to the palate. This method of preserving meat may be called national in these islands, for so did the original Charibs dress their food, whether fish or flesh. These savages were so fond of this cookery, and of such endurance, that an Indian returning from the chase, fatigued and hungry, would often wait patiently by the boucan, or as they called it, the *barbecu*, the best part of a day, until a fish or slice of hog, or beeve, was well cooked, the morsel being suspended almost two feet above a little and slow fire. The Charibs being cannibals, were often in use to treat their prisoners just as they treated their game, and I know many who, visiting some of the smaller windward islands, and also the Brazilian coast, saw great flitches of human flesh, smoked and barbecued, hanging in the huts. The meat, when sufficiently preserved in the manner which I have described, the Buccaneers placed in storehouses, built so that both land and sea winds may play well around them. The hides are also prepared in a rude fashion, and the tallow, the whole being periodically sold, either for money or goods, to the captains of privateers for their crews, or to certain planters in those islands in which cattle do not abound. The latter are the best customers, making regular contracts with the

Buccaneers for the supply of a certain quantity of meat and hides for a fixed sum, the stipulations on both sides being honourably adhered to. Many of the Buccaneers have servants and hired assistants, who are chiefly employed in conveying the cattle from the spot where they are killed to the boucan, and afterwards in helping to dress and stow away the food. Although this appeared to be a regular settlement, its inhabitants led but a roving life. Many of them intended to go to sea for a change at the first opportunity, and others conceiving that there were more cattle and fewer hunters to the eastward, spoke of shifting their quarters. This I heard while wandering about with Nicky, from boucan to boucan, and hut to hut. The scene indeed was a new one to me. Such groups of wild looking, blood-stained men; such slashing and cutting of meat, as though one were in the shambles; such shouting and singing in different tongues, mixed with the clamour of dogs and the screams of parrots, and other birds from the neighbouring groves; such quaffing of bumpers of brandy and constant smoking of tobacco; such an appearance indeed of rude plenty and coarse health and enjoyment—all this made a curious impression on me, and I returned to the hut pondering on it.

“ Well,” says Nicky, “ will you stay with us, and be my comrade, in lieu of poor Benjamin ?

Here is his stock in trade," pointing to two good guns and a little assortment of household stuff. "By the rules of the coast, as you know, we all work in couples. Each man has his comrade, with whom he shares all; and when one dies, the survivor is entitled to his partner's wealth and implements—the last of which I will very willingly bestow upon you, should you deem it meet to join me."

We talked for some time about the matter. My own mind was naturally buoyant, and my spirits easily fitted themselves to circumstances; and so, concluding that I would lead an adventurous life, and see much well worthy of being beheld, we in the end concluded a bargain; and then putting on a doublet which had belonged to poor Benjamin, and which being almost new, was but slightly smirched with blood, my partner summoned in several of the chief men to the hut; and they being accommodated with great goblets of brandy, admitted me by acclamation into the body of the brave Huntsmen and Buccaneers, and the ancient order of Brethren of the Coast, baptizing me in brandy, with various mummeries, by the nickname of Will Thistle, as showing my Scottish nativity. Then Jonas, who was there, would fain have had a carouse, but they persuaded him not, saying that there was ample work to do, and little time to do it in,

before the ships would arrive from Jamaica and Nevis for Boucan.

Behold me now, therefore, a Buccaneer on the coast of Hispaniola! I let my beard and moustache grow, and they and my hair, which was naturally luxuriant, mingling, I speedily looked as grim and grisly as any of them. My comrade, Nicky, was a good man and true; he had really felt the death of Benjamin, his partner, and so had been at first more grave and more reserved than usual. But as this natural feeling wore away, he became truly a merry madcap, with a jest, sometimes of the coarsest, or a lusty sea-song, or a tale of brave privateersmen, ever in his mouth. Under his tuition, I soon became a good shot, and learned to break up a bull or cow most scientifically with the knife. Also I became acquainted with the various trees and shrubs, birds and beasts of the coast. I knew how to fell the mountain cabbage, and to roast the savoury plantain in the hot cinders. I could bake the mealy cassava cake, and I knew how to bore the Frank palm for the luscious sap which flows from the wounded bark. Besides, these great forests and fair beaches teem with infinite food. We turned the lazy turtles which we found upon the shore, or hunted for their eggs in the hot sand. We intercepted and roasted the land-crab in his annual journey from the mountains; we shot the

guano or yellow lizard, as he whimpered in the boughs, and, prejudice being set aside, found his flesh like that of a barn-door fowl; while the racoon and the monkey both formed good roasts when we tired of pork and beef. Then on every pond bred flocks of fat ducks, and, in the season, the delicious ortolan fed amid the guinea grass. Great hosts of pigeons built in the high trees and the rocks, and the bright-coloured woodpeckers afforded us many a savoury dish. For the sea, the Mosquito men kept us well supplied. Standing in the bows of the canoe, with their barbed spears poised and ready, and their keen eyes fixed upon the water beneath, there was hardly a fish at which they darted their harpoons which the next moment lay not quivering and bleeding in the bottom of the boat.

CHAPTER V.

HOW WE ENCOUNTER GREAT DANGERS, THE SPANIARDS
ATTACKING US.

I HAVE said that the bay on which we lived was part of the mouth or estuary of the river Marmousette, which, rising in distant mountains, falls into the sea, between Port Plate, a great land-bound gulf, and a high cape called Point de Cas Rouge. A mile or so further up the country than the Buccaneer settlement, the coast was low and marshy; the mangroves here grew in great abundance, and divers deep channels of salt water ran away from the main branch of the sea, and led, some of them, to great open savannahs, covered with rich grass, where the wild cattle loved to come and feed. One day, five of us started in a small pirogue, which could barely contain such a crew, to seek for bulls and cows in these swampy prairies—a Buccaneer called Walshe, who perfectly knew the

mangrove canals, acting as pilot. We paddled up alongside of the bank, and having come to the swampy ground, directed the canoe through certain intricate channels in the forest of mangroves, with the intent of coming to a bit of the savannah favourable for our sport, which Walshe knew. It was curious, thus rowing, as it were, through a submerged forest. The water beneath us was very deep—for we were obliged to keep in the channels by reason of the mangroves growing on the muddy banks—and quite transparent, so long as the fat black slime remained undisturbed. Over head, the mangroves formed a complete canopy, so that we paddled in a hot green twilight, looking through long vistas of this natural alcove, or else trying in vain to make our eyesight penetrate more than a few yards athwart the infinity of grey, slimy stems. At this time, the tide was flowing inward, floating alongside of us broad layers of thick, rich scum, which gradually, as it were, clung to the trees on either side, leaving the mid-passage clear.

I, happening to be in the bow of the canoe as look-out man, amused myself by gazing down into the green, translucent sea, ahead of the ripples caused by the progress of the canoe. The channel could not have been less than three fathoms deep, yet I saw, as clearly as though there were nothing but air beneath me, the broad,

moving leaves of great plants at the bottom, and the heaps, and coils, and meshes of twisted stalks, and long, serpent-like withes springing from the fat mud, and which waved with a slow and sickly motion as the passing tide stirred them. There were also great shoals of fish of divers kinds, which fled away on all sides as we advanced ; but what fascinated my gaze was the appearance of a huge blue shark, which I could distinctly see cleaving the water about half way between the boat's keel and the bottom, and keeping pace with us very exactly. I was in the very act of raising my head to tell what I had seen, when I heard a loud exclamation from Walshe, who was steering, and who exclaimed that there was a rope stretched across the passage. The words were hardly out of his mouth, when the canoe struck the obstacle, broached to with the swing of the tide, and in an instant turned over, tilting us all, with a huge splash, into the water. As I went souse into the sea, the vision of the horrible monster which I had just seen shot through my very heart and brain, and striking out with convulsive strokes, in a moment I clutched a mangrove stem, and then, almost unknowing how I did it, I swung myself into the tree. Turning round, I looked for my companions ; two were clinging to the canoe, which was drifting rapidly away with the tide. Nicky, my comrade, was in a similar position to

myself, but on the opposite side of the creek; but poor Walshe was struggling in mid-channel, vainly trying, in his flurry, to swim against tide. We both shouted to him to sheer to one side; but just as he was attempting to do so, I saw a bluish white glimmer shoot through the troubled water beneath him, and at that moment, the poor fellow gave such an unearthly yell, that the woods echoed, flinging his arms about, and dashing the water into a foam, in the midst of which he disappeared, his cry ending in a loud, choking gurgle. Then there rose and rolled a great smooth, boiling wave, tinged with blood, as the shark, having secured his prey, turned again on his belly, and dived into the deep water. Nicky and I sat looking at each other for near the space of ten minutes without uttering a syllable. Then we began, I know not why, to talk in low whispers, and to consult upon our own situation. Our hope was, that the two hunters, who had stuck by the canoe, would be able to right it, and return for us, and so, joining our voices, we shouted loud and long, but the only answer which came back was the clamour of parrots and other birds, and the hissing sound of the water pouring between the slimy mangrove stems. We had no fire-arms, they having gone to the bottom when the canoe upset; so, having shouted ourselves hoarse, we had nothing for it but painfully to converse with each other. Our

discourse turned upon the cause of our mishap. The rope was, by this time, far beneath the water, but we could observe the tremor of the two stout mangroves to which it was attached. It was Nicky's opinion that there were Spaniards upon the coast, and that we had fallen into one of their traps—they being aware that we sometimes used these canals to paddle to the savannahs, and return with the ebb of the tide. "If so," said my comrade, "we shall not be left long here, and shall come by a fate not much better than that of poor Sam Walshe." I inquired if there was no hope of escape at low water, when we might wade through the water to firm ground; but my comrade replied, that unless we were giants, we could hope nothing from that. Neither would it be practicable to clamber shorewards from tree to tree, on account of the great multiplicity of canals and passages which traverse the mangroves, the smaller of which harboured caymans in their muddy depths. "No, no," concluded Nicky, "we can do nothing; we must wait and take our chance."

Presently the tide began silently to ebb, and in due time it left the marsh bare. But, oh! what a dismal spectacle that was! Everywhere fat banks of black mud, nourishing everlasting mangroves, the obscene slime here piled up in great rotting masses, there smooth in beds, from which bubbles of impure air would come bursting to the surface,

and sending up hideous smells of putrefaction. The air, indeed, became as the air of a pest-house. Dank vapours began to roll amid the trees, a sort of seething steam boiled up from the pools and canals, and by night-time a wet grey fog, which was as the very breath of fever, brooded all through the marsh. The night wind was hardly felt amid these woody solitudes; and if a gust sometimes swept by us, it only brought the unwholesome vapour in fresh supplies. From time to time, we called to each other. Nicky recommended me to keep the collar of my doublet between my teeth, so as to breathe through the stuff, but we suffered terribly from hunger. With the morning, the fog lifted, and the tide, which had of course flowed and ebbed during the night, began to flow again. Still, there was no appearance of relief. We would even have welcomed the arrival of the Spaniards, but not an oar or paddle-splash broke the terrible silence. We were both, I think, falling into a sort of stupor, when Nicky suddenly shouted to me.

“There—see, there!” he cried; “down the channel!

I looked, and lo! our canoe, still floating on her side and full of water, was coming drifting up, rubbing the mangrove stems, on my side of the channel.

“Now or never, Will Thistle!” cried Nicky.

"This is life or death! Catch her as she passes!"

I roused all my strength, and slipped down from the fork, where I had been sitting, until my legs were in the water. The canoe drifted close in, and I had no difficulty in catching the rope, which yet hung from her bow, and making it fast to the tree. At this Nicky gave a great hurrah; and slipping from his perch, swam boldly across the deep water, having grasped my hand before I was aware of his proximity. "Here," says he, "let me right the boat; a Mosquito man taught me the art." And, sure enough, in a minute or two the canoe was swimming properly, only still half full of water. This, however, we speedily baled with our hats, and, getting into the canoe, found it none the worse. By good chance a couple of spare paddles had been secured in the boat, with a piece of spun yarn. We being so far fortunate, shook hands with each other very heartily; and after bestowing a few sorrowful words upon our unhappy comrades, all of whom were indeed lost, we set ourselves to consider what was our best course to return again to the settlement. We could either have gone on with the flowing tide, and landed upon the savannah, as we had originally purposed, from whence we could have made our way by land, although the journey would be toilsome, or we might return into the open lagoon

in the canoe, and so paddle down the coast. This last plan we determined upon, even although, to follow it, there would be a necessity for waiting some hours, until the force of the flood-tide had spent itself. But to wait in hope, is another matter from remaining in despair; and so, making ourselves as comfortable in the canoe as we could, we tarried patiently. At length, the stream beginning to slacken, we pushed off, and paddled cautiously seaward. Coming to the spot where the rope had been stretched across the channel, we paused, and after some search, having found it, we managed to cast loose either end, although it was then near two feet under water, with the intention of carrying it away as a memorial of our escape. Hardly, however, had we got it into the canoe, when we heard the sound of oars and voices rapidly approaching, as if from the landward side. We paused to listen, hoping it might be our comrades coming in search of us; but presently, the sound approached so near, as to enable us to distinguish the Spanish accent of the speakers.

“Give way for the love of God!” I exclaimed, tossing the rope aside. We both seized the paddles, but ere the canoe had got headway, a large boat, full of men, suddenly appeared behind us at a winding of the channel. At sight of the canoe, they set up a great shout, called upon us in

Spanish, French, and English, to surrender. But we only plied our paddles the harder, working fast to seaward.

Oh, thought I, that we had not removed the rope, and then the Spaniards in their eagerness would have been caught in their own snare; but a minute's reflection told me that the tide was then too high for the line to have stopped the pursuing boat. The chase was now a most eager one. True, we were tired and faint; but the sight of our deadly enemies nerved our arms; the paddles bent and cracked, and the light canoe flew over the water, with a speed which the heavy boat astern could not hope long to cope with. At this moment, the Spaniards fired at us, the bullet flashed in the water along side, and Nicky cried to zig-zag the canoe—that is, to pull her by jerks from side to side, out of her true course, so as to make the object a more difficult one to hit. We accordingly paddled in this fashion, and it was completely effectual: not a shot struck us. Now a ball would sing overhead—now one would tear up the still water alongside of us; but neither the canoe nor ourselves were hit, although the Spaniards must have fired a score of shots. Still the efforts we were making were too severe to be long continued; and, in spite of our exertions, our muscles began to flag. It was then that, ahead of us, we saw a bend in the channel, on the right

of which grew a huge mangrove, with dozens of long cord-like withes depending into the water. "Thank God, we shall do yet," said Nicky, who knew the channel well; "pull for the other side of that big mangrove!" And in a moment the canoe glanced round the corner in question, and we were shut out from the view of the Spaniards. Here a small muddy creek, almost covered with foliage, diverged from the main channel.

"I know not where it leads," said my comrade, "but we must take it. The strait is too narrow to row in, so we cannot be followed."

The advice was good, and the canoe speedily flew up the tributary creek, urged on, not only by our paddles, but a favouring current. This last circumstance gave us good heart, for the tide being now ebbing, and the current along the passage in our favour, it was evident that it led to the open sea. The Spanish boat had, no doubt, passed the outlet of the small creek without observing it, for as we sat silently to listen, we heard the dash of the oars and the shouts of our pursuers to the left, but could see nothing through the thicket of mangrove stems. We were about to resume our paddles again when the distant sound of musquetry struck our ears. We both listened breathlessly; volley after volley was fired, and mingling with it came the deep roar of culverins and other heavy ordnance. In a moment

the crew of the boat near us, as though they had also heard the noise of conflict—gave a great shout of “Death to the Pirates!” for so they called the Buccaneers, and shot off their pieces in a loud, straggling volley.

“The settlement is beset,” said Nicky; “the Spaniards are on us in great force, and they must have been lurking in the lagoon for days; this explains the cowardly treachery of the rope,” and he broke into loud invectives against our enemies, to all of which I most heartily said “Amen.” For was not this attack most wanton? Here were we, living in a wilderness belonging to no man, killing those wild animals which God hath appointed to be human food, and so far surely performing a service to our fellows, when down come the Spaniards upon us out of pure arrogance and ill-blood, hanging and shooting our defenceless hunters, and, as we had no doubt, now attempting to destroy our huts and the property, for the accumulation of which we had honestly sweated and toiled. But such it has been ever since any flag but that of Spain floated in these seas. The mariners of many nations came naturally to enrich themselves with the produce of the new-discovered lands; but Spain arrogantly desired to squeeze in her greedy gripe the whole New World! Therefore, is it wonderful that we—the sailors of England, Scotland, France, Holland, and Por-

tugal—should give the Spaniards fierce and eager battle? It was they who began the warfare, and such being the case, we paid them back in their own coin—usually, indeed, giving them the worst of the bargain.

Such were the natural thoughts which passed through my head as we sat listening to the roar of battle, which we could hear but faintly, being more than a league distant from home. Presently, without speaking, we addressed ourselves steadily to our paddles, and it was not long before, to our great joy, we shot out of the dreary forest of mangroves, and found ourselves in the clear water of the lagoon. The boat which had given us chase was not anywhere to be seen; but we now heard the firing distinctly, for it was kept up very hot and constant. By this time the tide was running out like a mill stream, and the canoe was swept down with great rapidity before it. There was no wind, and the current had a glassy look; the air, too, was inexpressibly sultry. Great wreaths of dense vapour hung upon the hills, and the firmament was one louring sea of black clouds piled one above another, as though climbing up on each other's vapoury shoulders from the horizon to the zenith. Presently the gloom increased to a foreboding blackness, which hung upon land and sea. The sounds of the birds and the insects were hushed, and in the intervals of the firing we

heard only the low continuous rush of the turbid tide washing amid the mangroves. All at once a great flash of lightning tore, as it were, the black firmament into a blue gulf of flame, and at the same instant the thunder came, not rumbling or pealing, as I have heard it in Britain, but exploding with a splitting crash which seemed right above us, and which went through and through our ears. A quick succession of flashes and peals followed, so that I was almost blinded and deafened, for I had never seen or heard such terrible thunder or lightning; and then, at the recommendation of Nicky, who said that the storm would probably clear up with a squall, which we were ill prepared to face in the open lagoon, we paddled into a little opening in the amphibious forest, and made the canoe fast amid the trees. Here we abode for more than half an hour, the thunder and lightning continuing to be fearful; and the effect of each flash, gleaming down through the thick leaves and branches of the network of boughs above us, and lighting up with a grim glare the unwholesome marsh, with its slimy stake-like boles of trees, its long twisting withes, and its black oily pools and channels,—the effect of all this was, I say, very fearfully grand. But at length the rain began to fall; the gloom deepened, so that under the mangroves it was as murky as midnight; but gazing from beneath them

to the opposite side of the lagoon, we saw dimly a sort of moving and rending of the vapoury clouds, and then a sudden and perpendicular descent upon the hills of what appeared to be countless streaks of mist or vapour, binding, as it were, the green earth by webs of watery thread to the firmament. This, Nicky said, was the rain, and truly we found it so; for the misty appearance spread fast and far, and we heard a mighty rustling sound, which became louder and louder, until the windows of heaven above us were opened, and down, not in mere drops, as it appeared to me, but in opaque sheets and masses of falling water, tumbled that blinding rain, lashing the sea as though it were smitten by rods into churning foam, and beating with a continuous assault our leafy canopy, until it poured through the drenched branches in tiny waterfalls. Meanwhile we cowered in the canoe dripping from every limb, and watching the weather over the lagoon. Before long, there was a sudden rift or opening torn through the veiling fog, and the perpendicular lines of the rain became slanting, or were broken and dispersed. At the same moment, we saw distant ridges which were hid and lost before in the vapour, now standing out clearly and rigidly in the thinning air, and Nicky whispered to me to note how the feathery palms were bending and shaking, as though great airy hands, were

seeking to drag them up by the roots. It was the clearing squall, and a few moments only passed away ere heavy dank puffs sighed through the mangroves with a wet, warm, unwholesome savour, as the steams of a caldron where masses of putrid vegetation were simmering, and then, driving before it a broad belt of tumbling foam, and whistling and hurtling through the air with a sound as of rushing wings and blowing trumpets, the blast came down from the far-off mountains and fell upon the sea. I have often seen more violent squalls since, I have also been afloat and ashore during a hurricane or tornado, but this was the first West Indian tempest I encountered, and I did not soon forget the great grandeur of the elements—the torn clouds flying in misty fragments—the blast whizzing through the trees, with a long, loud eldritch cry—the foam gathered up from the sea, like the drift from the great wreaths of snow at Christmas on a Scottish muir—the rustling hosts of leaves, and rent and riven foliage scattered through the air—all the confusion of wild noises, the dash of the troubled sea, and the constant crackling and smashing of boughs and branches, torn out and blown fast away to leeward.

In the midst of the elemental strife there shone upon the waving and dripping woods, and the torn and tumbling sea, a pale watery ray of sun-

light. This was the indication that the fury of the storm was over. The broken clouds showed patches of deep azure here and there; the mists had been rolled away to sea in the impetuous currents of air; presently the gust lulled; the foam flew no longer above the water; and the birds began to cry from out the thickets. Nicky therefore counselled that we should again put to sea.

“The squall,” he said, “must have put an end to the fight, and if the Spaniards be attacking our huts from their ships, which is most likely, they may well have been either driven ashore upon the bluff, or blown out to sea.”

So we paddled cautiously along the edge of the mangroves, listening for any sound of the renewal of the combat, but heard none. It was obvious that, one way or another, the matter was decided—either that our comrades had been overpowered, or that the Spaniards had been forced by the weather to discontinue the attack. At length, we approached a point in the shore where the character of the bank changed—the ground heaving itself boldly above the high-water mark, and the mangroves ceasing to grow; a little further on, a bluff of limestone rock, overgrown with brush and creeping trees, and its base green with tangled and slippery sea-weeds, stretched out into the water, and from the top of this we knew our settlement

was visible. Having, therefore, made fast the canoe in a suitable place, we clambered through the dripping grass and leaves to the summit, and there saw a piteous sight. The rock being high, we overlooked several small capes and bays which stretched between us and our late habitation, and saw plainly the green bank upon which our huts stood, and the pretty clear bay, with its crescent of white sand and shingle beneath. In this bay—with her top-gallant-masts struck, and top-masts and yards lowered—there lay a great Spanish ship, carrying not less than thirty guns, with immensely high forecastle and poop. Moored somewhat nearer the beach was the smaller Spanish ship which had already attacked us, riding also very snugly with her top hamper lowered; and astern of them, and ashore upon the rocky bluff which formed the seaward horn of our bay, was a small sloop, which, as we conjectured, had been driven from her moorings by the force of the tempest, and now lay bodily upon the rocks, the sea beating and breaking over her. But the piteous sight was our huts and storehouses—some lay in ruins on the ground, torn and shattered by cannon-balls, others had been set on fire, but the rain, having so plenteously descended, had extinguished the flames, which, however, still smouldered in the blackened ashes and amid the charred timber, sending up thin volumes of bluish

grey smoke. All over the beach were scattered the bales and casks in which we had been used to store the provisions we made ; and the principal of these the Spanish robbers were removing into the great ship ; but, saddest sight of all, round the burning huts, and upon the shingle down to the water's edge, were strewn the corpses of our late comrades, they having evidently sold their lives dear, for many Spanish soldiers and seamen were stretched out starkly among them.

We long remained crouched amid the brush-wood, regarding this sad spectacle as though fascinated by its horrors. Who had escaped ? we thought ; and, if any, where, and how ? Not a man in our company but who was brave as the steel he wielded ; but what could a handful of undisciplined hunters and sailors do against the broadsides of two Spanish men-of-war ?

Nicky and I looked at each other mournfully—unarmed, and fainting with hunger and thirst, what were we to do. Under the torments of the latter infliction, however, we found that we need not long suffer. In the hollows of the rocks, and the reservoirs of the large green leaves of divers plants, the heavy rain had left abundance of water, of which we drank and were refreshed. After this, we sat down in a sheltered nook to hold a council of war. The Spaniards were still busy upon the beach, and occasionally straggling

into the woods. Boats were continually passing from the ships to our shingle wharf, and we saw preparations being made to warp the sloop off the rocks, from which we concluded that she had not been much damaged. Nicky and I had hardly begun to consult upon our condition, when we suddenly heard the voices of men in a suppressed tone, not far from us, in the thick underwood. As the speakers might be Spanish, we ceased to talk, and lay close, burying our persons, as it were, in the long coarse grass, and listening with all our ears. The distant talking continued, but in what tongue we could not tell, for the wind still blew in gusts, and ever and anon carried away the sound. At length, just as we were despairing of making out who our neighbours were, I felt something wet and cold glide from under my bare leg, and turning sharply round, I saw the grass moving, and the green glistening skin of a snake gliding over my flesh. Involuntarily, and with a great shout, I started up. "It is all over," said Nicky; "we are discovered." But in a moment a gruff voice hallooed—

"Who goes there?"

And we both joyfully cried out in reply, that we were friends and comrades. Immediately there was a great rustling in the boughs, and running up thither we presently found a remnant of our own company, who grasped our hands, and could

scarce speak for joy at seeing us. The men who thus joined us were five in number : Ezra Hoskins, an English seaman of Dover, called by us Stout Jem, not only for his size and muscle, which were prodigious, but because of his boldness and fearlessness of heart ; then there was another Englishman, from Newcastle, whose real name I know not, because I never heard him called by any appellation but that of Black Diamond ; and a Hollander, a sturdy slow-witted fellow, from Helvoetsluys, near the Brill, whom we called Meinheer ; the other two persons were the Mosquito Indians, Blue Peter and Jack, skilful strikers of fish and manatee, and very attached, faithful fellows.

You may be sure that we had much to tell each other of our adventures. First, Nicky narrated our mischance in the Mangrove Creek, from the devil-like snares of the crafty and cowardly Spaniards. And then, Stout Jem told how, in the evening of the previous day, the Indians being fishing towards the open sea, saw the sloop working up with the last of the sea-breeze, but considered her to be a friend, from one of the windward islands, come to load ; and how the Buccaneers, being thus thrown off their guard, had hoisted lights upon the headland, to guide her after it fell dark. It had certainly surprised them to see answering lights, as it appeared, further up the

lagoon, and they had set a good watch, and were wakeful in consequence, not well knowing what to expect. As the night wore on, and our canoe did not make its appearance, their anxiety increased, and towards morning a Mosquito man, who had been hunting manatee in the sedgy banks of the savannahs, came into the settlement, and reported that he had heard the oars of boats pulling in the Mangrove Channels, and that he had seen lights glimmering amid the night-fog. It was now evident that there was something in the wind, but they never reckoned on being attacked by such a force as came against them. Besides, the strangers might be all French from Tortugas, or St. Christopher's, or Dutch from Curaçoa, and might not exactly know how the old settlers would relish an intrusion in their hunting grounds. It was not until almost day, that our comrades saw a great ship coming into the bay, being towed against the land-wind or *terral*, which was then waxing faint, by her boats. A pirogue went off to her, but not returning, those on shore concluded that the arrival was friendly, and that their comrades had stayed on board to carouse, and they were only undeceived upon the rising of the sun, when they saw two Spanish men-of-war, besides the sloop lying in the bay, and were saluted with hot salvos of artillery. Seeing their mistake, the Buccaneers, following their usual

tactics, leaped into their canoes and tried to board. But the Spaniards hove great stones and cold shot into the boats, keeping up at the same time a sharp discharge of musketry, so that the canoes being broken and swamped, those who were not maimed or killed of their crews, were fain to swim to land, where they were again attacked by a body of Spaniards, who, with loud shouts, issued from the woods, proving how skilfully the whole position had been invested. The Buccaneers, being thus sorely discomfited, retreated into the cover of the brushwood and trees, and maintained a distant fight, aiming chiefly at the Spaniards who showed themselves on board the ships, and those who emerged from the seaward-side of the huts. This lasted nearly all the morning, when the weather becoming threatening, the Spaniards, who were until then held as it were in check, determined to make a great effort, and calling to their men ashore to take care of themselves, opened a great fire upon the huts, the balls crashing through and through them, and, at the same time, flinging fire-balls and other combustibles, so that presently one half of the settlement was in flames, and the other demolished. Then the Dons landed in great force, and were met by the remnant of our comrades, who fought desperately. But the Spaniards having overwhelming numbers, finally routed

them, and drove them by small parties into the woods. It was at the conclusion of this affray that the storm came on, and since its abatement our comrades had been roving along the shore, seeking any other survivors of the fight, but hitherto finding none.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE DEADLY FEVER OF THE COAST FASTENS ON ME.

SUCH was the history of the treacherous Spanish attack which destroyed the settlement of the Marmousette. Our first care was to learn how the party we had met in with were armed, and great was our delight to find that the Indians carried two guns apiece, nearly all the muskets in the village having been brought into the woods. Besides there was abundance of ammunition. After a short consultation, it was determined to take the canoe, and although our number would somewhat overload her, to cross to the other side of the bay, where we had more security against being molested. Having therefore carefully looked to our pieces, we clambered down the bank, and standing by the canoe, unanimously invested Stout Jem with the command of the expedition. As the Indians used the paddles most dexte-

rously, they were set to work to propel us, and with Stout Jem for steersman, we set out. On our way I began to experience a drowsiness, which I had before felt, but immediately checked. Now, however, the sensation, amounting indeed to one of impending stupor, began again to overpower me. My chin fell upon my chest, and I had little snatches of disturbed sleep, in which curious confused ideas, and odd combinations of words and things, seemed to float into my brain, and which, when I started up again which I would do every minute, fled away like phantoms, so that I could not for my life remember what I had been dreaming of the moment before. All this time I was inwardly urged to speak, I seemed to have nothing to say, but still something forced my tongue and lips to move, and all at once I called out—

“Is that a black corby on the thornbush near the boat’s grapnel?”

At this extraordinary speech, the Englishmen in the canoe turned sharp round to me, and Stout Jem asked what I meant. At his voice all the dreamy sensations left me, and I felt myself blushing up to the roots of my hair, and wondering what I had said, for I remembered not a word.

“Here,” said Stout Jem, kindly, “swallow this, my good boy;” and he held me a great flask of

spirits. "You have been breathing over-much marsh fog on an empty stomach, but you'll live to pay off Jack Spaniard yet."

I took the flask and held it to my head, when suddenly the greasy leathern bottle appeared to swell and lengthen, until it seemed a puncheon which I held. A curious nervous feeling came crawling over my limbs, and my breath grew thick, and my eyes dim. The first taste of the brandy banished these sensations, and the cordial marvellously restored me.

"You must eat somewhat when we go ashore," said Nicky. "I am ravenous, and then we will consult on what we can do to take our revenge."

"No, no; no eat," said Blue Peter, the Mosquito Indian; "sleep mosh, sleep good, smoke pipe, and sleep cool and long."

But I felt so much better that I fully intended to make a good dinner. We landed in one of the bushy coves which abound in the frith of the Marmousette, and which could not be seen by the Spaniards on the other bank. Stout Jem then despatched the Indians to hunt, and ordered the rest of the party to aid in building a hut. Nicky and myself, however, were so weak from want of food, that we were excused; and the Dutchman having some biscuits and smoked beef in his pocket, generously gave us enough to make a good meal. Meantime, Stout Jem, Black Dia-

mond, and Meinheer, were actively at work. They had two hatchets, and their long knives, and with these they felled and prepared sufficient wood for their purpose, driving stakes into the earth, and interweaving leafy branches, with the skill of experienced foresters. Nicky and I were then set to work to pull a quantity of coarse long grass, which grew upon the beach, for beds; and one of the Mosquito men returning, he kindled a fire, and began to cook the hind quarter of a fine boar which he had shot in the wood. Meantime, I was plucking the grass, sometimes sitting by the sea-side, for I felt weak and ill. The food I had eaten was no refreshment. My temples throbbed strangely, and my skin was fevered and dry. Then these horrible wandering thoughts began to come again, and I squeezed my head with my hands, as though I could thus drive them out. Sometimes I thought I felt again the hot marsh vapour sickening the air; then the sea-breeze fanning me, I would tear the clothes from my chest, and put back my long dank hair to let the blessed cool wind play freely on me, and cool my seething blood.

All at once I saw, under the shade of a genipa tree, a tall stout man, who stood motionless, and watched me. Deeming him a Spaniard, I would have shouted out, but my tongue refused to obey me, and turning hot and dry, rattled as it were

against my teeth, while no sound but a low hiss could I form. Still the figure stood there ; and now I saw a glimmer as of a naked weapon which it held. The sun being now setting, his rays came slanting down, and one of these quivering through the trees fell full upon the face of the stranger, and I saw that it was Walshe, with his great eyes glaring at me, just as they glared when the shark rose in the mangrove canal, and pulled him down beneath his crunching teeth. I stood trembling, and trying to pray. The features were livid and blue, and the eyes sunk and expressionless, yet horribly bright. Just at this moment one of the last puffs of the sea-breeze shook the trees around, and the sunlight falling in a different stream, and chequered by other branches upon the appearance, the face gradually seemed to change. Feature after feature melted away, until the agonized countenance of the unfortunate seaman was gone, and, instead of it, there remained the massive features and pensive gravity of my preserver on board the Frenchman—Wright. Just then the weapon, which I had formerly observed to glitter, moved, and I saw the figure heave up a great broad axe on one hand, and point to it with the other. It was, indeed, the regicide, with the emblem and the instrument of his deed.

Making a sudden effort, I burst the leaden

bonds which seemed to confine me, and with a strange courage rushed forward. As I did, the phantom grew dim and dimmer, and when I placed my hand upon its breast, I felt but the gnarled bark of the genippa tree, whilst the axe, at the same instant, seemed to become a branch with clustering foliage dancing in the wind. I grew directly sick and faint.

"Oh, my God!" I murmured, "I am going mad! My brain is whirling, and my eyes make me see things which are not!" and so I sank upon the ground, and sobbed. Presently, I was somewhat better, and I manned myself. "It is but a feverish attack," I thought. "I will return and try to sleep." It was, however, with some difficulty that I arrived at the hut. My limbs felt as if loaded with lead, and the pain of an intense headach went like hot iron wires into my brain. When I reached our half-finished abode, I saw everything through a sort of haze, and the voices at my ear appeared to come from miles away. I was soon placed, lying upon bundles of grass, in the windward side of the hut, and after that I remember little more of what happened during three nights and three days. Only I know that my sufferings were very great; that my mind appeared to ramble as though it were a disturbed spirit or ghost flitting all over the world. Now, I would seem to be far away on the pleasant coast

of Fife. The sun would shine, and the corn rustle, and the yellow broom by the burnie's banks smell sweet in the summer's breath. But I could enjoy nought. I was as it were seared, and the sources of pleasure dried up. I saw the forms of people I loved, but I could speak to none. I saw my mother sitting on a sandy knowe, resting her head upon her hand, and looking over the blue sea. But when I would embrace her, there came darkness and pain, and the vision vanished. Then, perhaps, in my delirium, I would fancy I was at sea; sometimes it was in the old fisher boat, the Royal Thistle. No wind would stir, the sky would be glowing like a heated copper globe, and the boat would lie moveless as though nailed to the unstirring sea. Suddenly my father's eyes would look into mine with a long wan stare, and so would we sit glaring at each other, like famishing and despairing beasts, while months, and years, and ages, would appear to come and go and bring no change. Anon, the mood would alter. Then I was on board the old brig, Jean Livingstone, with a merry breeze and a blithesome crew. The bonny crags of St. Andrew's Bay would seem under our lee, with the ruined towers of abbeys and churches rising over the green links, and fading from our sight, as we worked gallantly seawards. But the scene would straightway change to a furious storm in a mid-winter night, with the

foam of the sea and the snow flakes flying together. Then round the light of the binnacle there would crowd ghastly faces, staring into mine—faces with shaggy antique beards like the ancient sailors of Sir Patrick Spens, long, long sleeping in the wild north sea; and so surrounded by these fishy eyes of hapless drowned mariners, I would feel the good brig seem to founder beneath my feet, so that I would start struggling up from my bed of grass, crying out that I was drowning—that the boiling waves were choking me!

This was my seasoning fever, as they called it; and, though it did not last long—thanks to the good treatment and the medicinal herbs of the Mosquito men—it left me passing weak and helpless. I recovered my reason all at once, as one waking from the stupor of deep sleep. My hair had been cut close, and my head was tied round with freshly plucked plantain leaves, constantly drenched with water. I lay upon blankets, none of which we possessed when I was taken ill, and my linen was reasonably clean and fresh. The wattled hut was open to the breeze on every side, and as it contained but one bed more, I guessed that it had been given up for my use and that of my partner, Nicky, as indeed it had. Looking around, I saw several pots, pans, baskets, and boxes scattered about, from which I concluded that the Spaniards had departed, and that my

comrades had been able to recover some of the wreck of their property from the ruins of their habitations. And this, indeed, I found afterwards to be the case.

I was too weak at first to call out, and so remained in silence, enjoying a delicious languor, and cool and moist from head to foot. The fever had thoroughly left me, and I felt thankful and devoutly glad. Presently I distinguished the well-known smell of the smouldering fire of the boucan floating into the hut, and soon afterwards, Nicky, with bare arms and grimed hands, entered; his eyes sparkled when he saw me so much recovered, and presently calling the rest together, they all shook hands with me, and told me to be of good cheer, for I had fore-reached on the marsh fever, and would soon be quite hearty. And so, indeed, it was. I grew very hungry, and, being well fed, regained my strength fast, so that, two or three days after the fever left my blood, I was abroad sniffing the cool breezes of the sea.

Except two men—both French—who had joined when I was ill, none of the survivors of our original party had turned up; some of them had no doubt been made prisoners by the Spaniards, others might have started off along the coast to the eastward, as, indeed, many previously intended; but we feared that upwards of one half of our comrades were, either captives, who would

be forced to labour in the mines of Cuba, or had already—and the fate of these latter was more to be envied—died with their wounds, in front, giving battle to the Spanish robbers.

Being little able to work for some time after my recovery, and the rest of the party being engaged in the usual toil of hunting wild cattle, and preserving the meat by the boucan, it was often my habit to take the canoe and proceed in her down towards the mouth of the bay, so as to enjoy the fresh and briny breeze which came from the north-west across the ocean. To make these expeditions more pleasant, I prepared a mast with a small lug sail, such as the canoe could bear and I could manage with ease. Almost my first trip, when thus provided, was to the scene of the late contest. I found nearly every trace of a settlement destroyed. The rude jetty was all but demolished, and over the ruins of the shattered huts great crops of luxuriant herbage had grown, from which I often started snakes and venomous insects, such as centipedes and scorpions, who delighted to make their nests in the holes and crevices, which they found in abundance amidst the ruins of our huts. On a sweet spot of green-sward, under the shadow of a great spreading tree, there were rows of little mounds, very green. Here our poor comrades lay buried. The Spaniards, it seems, had interred their dead, and

on their departure, which happened on the day after I was attacked with fever, all our party had gone across the bay, and laid the dead Buccaneers beneath the mould. Upon the bark of the great tree I was at pains to carve a deep cross ; for, though the symbol in Europe be the mark of a corrupt and idolatrous church, still I felt that in the wilderness it might bear a truer and a wider meaning, and point out to future strangers that the mounds beneath the tree covered the graves of Christian men.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BUCCANEERS TIRE OF THE LIFE ON SHORE, AND
DETERMINE TO GO AGAIN TO SEA.

SEARCHING about the place, I often discovered little matters, which I stored in the canoe and brought to our new settlement, such as axes and hammers, harpoons for striking fish, fragments of cordage, rope, and canvas; and twice I dug up from the ruins, boxes containing seamen's clothes, which were very welcome to us all; in one of these trunks I discovered some Spanish books, including a grammar and dictionary, and of these I hastened to avail myself, inasmuch as I saw that a knowledge of this language might soon be of the greatest service to me. Neither did my companions grudge that I thus applied much of my time to study, for none of them knew more than a few words of Spanish, and they were quite aware of the advantage of having one at least of their party conversant with that tongue.

Thus, time passed away tolerably pleasantly. The season for the arrival of the ships expected to load with the boucan prepared for them at the village on the east side of the bay, having passed, and none of them appearing, we concluded that stragglers from our old company had succeeded in making their way to Jamaica, Tortugas, and other islands, and had informed the merchants and planters there of the attacks of the Spaniards, and the utter ruin of the settlement, adding, very probably, that they were the sole survivors of the massacre. It, therefore, became a question with us what to do. The Frenchmen were for journeying along the coast to the westward, and then watching an opportunity to go across to Tortugas; but Stout Jem told them they might do so if they pleased, but he would prefer an island where his own countrymen had something to say in matters, an opinion which the rest of the English, as well as the Dutchmen and the Indians, who do not love the French, joined in very cordially. The Frenchmen, who, to do them justice, were very good fellows, on this gave up their proposition and swore that they would follow Stout Jem to the death.

“ Say you so, my boys?” cried the Dover mariner. “ Then so be it; and what I propose is this. Here be nine stout men of us, for I count the Indians as good as white blood. Our peaceful

trade in beef and hides hath been ruined by these accursed Spaniards, so I vote for the sea again."

This proposal meeting with a clamour of approbation, Stout Jem flung aloft his hat.

"We have had enough of the shore this bout, mates," quoth he. "I want to hear the wind whistle through tarry ropes again, and feel a stout ship dancing under my feet."

"Yah, yah," said the Hollander. "We zaal be Zee Roovers once more;" and all the company flung up their hats like our leader, and swore that they would take deep vengeance on Jack Spaniard. For my part, I was well pleased, for I felt I was a sailor, and that I had no business to be following a hunter's life ashore. I had not very much taste for shooting bullocks, and still less for breaking them up, cooking, and storing them; and, although I had always cheerfully taken my turn to watch the boucan fire, my mind would often stray away upon the ocean, and I would pant for the fresh sea-breeze, and the dash of the foaming brine. As for my comrade, Nicky, he was that easy kind of going man, that he seemed to care very little whether he was on land or sea. He worked, ate, drank, sang, and slept, and then rose merrily next day to go through the same routine. But Stout Jem, who was the life and soul, as well as the captain of our party, was a sailor all over. He had been many years in the Caribbean sea,

was a good pilot, understood every current, and every indication of the weather; and moreover, knew by heart every buccaneering trick for easing of their cargoes the treasure-ships of the Dons.

But before we could go to sea, we must have a vessel; and saving the canoe, which was hardly fit for a cruiser, we were as unprovided as though we lived on the top of a mountain. There was nothing therefore for it, as we could not go in a ship to the Spaniards, but to wait until the Spaniards should come in a ship to us, that is to say, in such a small ship as we could master, and afterwards manage. We might, indeed, have not found much difficulty in entering an English privateer, many of whom we knew were hovering on the coast; but being acquainted with each other well, we preferred in the first place to capture such a small craft as we could man, afterwards making such additions to our crew as might from time to time be resolved on. In the meanwhile, we continued to hunt and prepare the flesh of wild cattle and boars, so that we should have a good stock of provisions when we were ready to go to sea.

Being, as I have said, always fonder of water than land, I often induced the Mosquito Indians to allow me go with them in their canoe, when they went to strike fish and manatee. Generally the Indians permit no one to accompany them in

these expeditions, and if they are forced to allow a white man into the canoe, they will purposely miss their aim at every fish or animal they strike, and so return empty handed. However, I being a great favourite with Blue Peter, who had indeed saved my life in the fever; and losing no opportunity, by such petty gifts as I had it in my power to make, of showing my gratitude, he made no objections to my accompanying him and his comrade in many of their expeditions.

We used to start before sunrise, Blue Peter in the bows of the canoe, and Jack in the stern, both paddling quickly, while I sat amidships in the bottom. No Europeans I ever saw can paddle so silently, swiftly, and surely, as the Indians of the Mosquito coast. They hold the shaft of the paddle almost upright, never touching the gunwale therewith, or splashing rudely in the water. On the contrary, the broad part of the paddle dips as clean as a knife, and the canoe glides with a perfectly smooth and rapid motion, so that did you not observe how fast the water ripples by, you would hardly think you were moving at all. When pursuing the manatee, our usual game, the head of the canoe was turned up the creek, to the higher banks, where the shore was sedgy and low, where the mangroves reared their dismal groves, and where, the water gradually becoming brackish and muddy, there is found floating and

waving from the banks, the long narrow-bladed grass on which the manatee chiefly loves to feed. The creature we hunted is a harmless beast, like a great seal. It is a misfortune for himself, that he has tender white flesh, tasting like veal, and that his skin makes very good thongs and straps, which the Buccaneers use for divers purposes. Were it not so, he might float unmolested in the warm muddy water, nibbling the streaming grass, as the lazy current carries his heavy form slowly up and down the mangrove canals, and twinkling his little pig-like eyes, and anxiously jerking his great stupid looking head, if a cayman rolls with a splash from the muddy bank into the river, or a squatting flock of wild-ducks rise with a whirr, from the sedgy surface of a neighbouring pool.

But the poor manatee, being good to eat, must submit to be harpooned and eaten. When we came to the feeding ground which he loves, the Indians would paddle with double caution, and Blue Peter, who was the striker, would carefully examine his harpoon, and see that it lay convenient to his hand. The spear used for capturing the manatee is about eight feet long. The iron barb, a heavy and sharp piece of metal, is attached to the thicker end, and to the other is fastened a circular knob called the bobwood, round which is wound a strong line, one end of which is fast to the bobwood, the other to the iron of the harpoon.

When the weapon is flung, the barb alone sinks into the creature's flesh, the staff coming unloosed from the iron, and the line rapidly unwinding from the bobwood, as the stricken creature dives in its agony and fear. The Indians then paddle after the staff, and having seized it, gradually wear out the strength of the game, and kill it.

I shall not soon forget the first manatee hunt I saw. We embarked at early dawn, and glided silently along the green shore, from which the mist of the night was lifting and rolling in white clouds far up the mountains. After long skirting the mangrove wood, we turned from the main channel into a narrow creek, slipping along in perfect silence. Listen as I would, I could not even hear the wash of the water at the canoe's bow, her mould was so perfect, and so steady the strokes which propelled her. The drip of the water from the paddles, as they were lifted, alone made a slight tinkling sound. The sea-breeze had not yet begun to blow, and the sun came down scorchingly upon the tangled wood and the green water, the surface of which glanced like bright, clear oil. Presently, Blue Peter laid his paddle noiselessly down, and took up the harpoon. I looked anxiously a-head. Clustered round the trunk of a vast mangrove, which rose up out of the water, there was a tangled heap of soaking grass and weeds. The kneeling Indian crouched

as if he were a graven image of ebony or bronze, and I saw the floating weeds move, and heard a grinding, spluttering sound, as of a cow grazing. Then the Indian moved a finger of his left hand, which he had kept outstretched ; his comrade at the stern saw the sign, and a peculiar sweep of the paddle sent the canoe slantingly towards the weeds. As she diverged from her course, Blue Peter stood erect, and raising his right arm, with all the muscles swelling out like knots and lumps of iron, darted the harpoon, as it appeared to me, into the centre of the moving weeds. Instantly there was a great splash and plunge, and the canoe rocked upon a wave, which scattered the floating herbage, so that I saw disappearing in the water the broad brown back of a creature as large as a cow. Blue Peter, the instant he struck, sank again upon his knees, and snatching up the paddle, prepared to move. Meantime, I could see nothing of the harpoon, for it had been carried under water. The Mosquito men then talked to each other in their own tongue, pointing to the direction in which the manatee appeared to have dived, and then began to paddle lustily. About five minutes might have elapsed, when Blue Peter exclaimed, " Ho !—there !" and pointed. I, looking in the same direction, descried the staff of the harpoon seeming to fly along the surface of the water, the round bobwood throwing up a foam two

feet high. Then the Mosquito-men pulled hard in chase. I could never have thought that their gaunt, brown bodies had so much strength in them. The muscles of their naked arms and chests strained and swelled, the paddle-shafts cracked, and the canoe seemed at every stroke to be lifted out of the water. Still they did not gain upon the harpoon towed by the manatee, but, on the contrary, rather lost, so that I began to fear that we would never see either harpoon or quarry; but, on a sudden, the motion of the former stopped, and it floated tranquilly upon the water. The manatee, being fatigued, had sunk to the bottom, and lay there. We now paddled carefully up, and Blue Peter caught the staff, and began to pull upon the line. Immediately that the wounded creature felt the smart, it started again. I saw the line vibrate and stretch out in a direction abeam of the canoe; but, in a moment, Jack, who held the steering-paddle, swept the bows round in the direction taken by the manatee, while Blue Peter fastened the line to the prow of the canoe. There was a jerk or two, though not so much as I expected, and straightway we began to move ahead, Peter crouching in the bows, signing to Jack how to steer. For near a quarter of an hour did the wounded beast drag us through the water, sometimes so swiftly that the foam whizzed past us — anon changing his course

so suddenly, that had not the canoe been steered with perfect skill, he would have dragged us under water. Then, his strength beginning to ebb from him fast, we hauled upon the line, and gradually closed with our prey, whose blood was now reddening the water. I pitied the poor creature, as he put his head above the surface, and grunted and moaned after his fashion, but he was soon out of his pain. Slipping alongside of the carcass, Blue Peter passed his long knife around its throat, and after one or two struggles and plunges, the manatee turned over upon its back, dead. We towed him ashore, and securing him to a tree, presently paddled off in search of more game of the same sort.

But upon the whole, I better loved our fishing expeditions than the hunt of the manatee. The poor defenceless brute always inspired me with pity. There is a meekness about his face which moves one. He makes no attempt to turn to bay or show fight, but is slaughtered as unresistingly as a calf, and the haunts he loves are the muddy and unwholesome canals among the mangrove swamps. But in spearing fish we often rowed down the bay to the rocky points and ledges of reef which formed the outermost horns of the lagoon. There the clear, blue sea, white spangled by the merry strength of the sea-breeze, stretched illimitably out, and the everlasting surf flung aloft

its clouds of sparkling spray, high up among the rocks, now and then giving the bushes a taste of the savour of brine. It was in the still pools and channels, formed by breakwaters of rock, that the canoe was then navigated. Let the sea-breeze be blowing, and the surging swells be tossing in, as hard and fast as they might, there was always calm water behind the reefs—so calm and so clear ! I might think that I was looking into the swirlings of our trout pool in the Balwearie Burn, but for the bright, jagged coral, and the strange sea-weeds at the bottom, and the still stranger fishes floating, as it were, in pure mid air, but a fathom down beneath the keel of the canoe. Gliding over these translucent waters, sometimes scraping the battered side of our skiff against the rough coral edges ; sometimes receiving a sparkling shower of spray when a bigger wave than ordinary burst upon the outside reef, the Mosquito men were in their glory. Blue Peter stood erect in the bow, his black, flashing eyes fixed on the water as though he would note every scollop in the edge of the jagged sea-weed, or every wavy ridge on the bed of white sand, and his long thin fish-spear darting occasionally down into the flood to be straightway drawn, bending and quivering, back with a noble fish, writhing and floundering, impaled upon the barbs. Always upon these expeditions I kept a good look-out

seaward, and often mounted pinnacles of rock that I might have the better view. Once or twice I saw a sail, apparently set on board a small vessel, slipping quickly down to the westward, or beating painfully to windward; but the barks were too far at sea for me to make out aught of their character or country.

During this period of my sojourn in Hispaniola it was our custom to spend the evenings together in the principal hut—that which was first constructed, and which was of an ample bigness. Here, seated round a great chest, which served for a table, we smoked our pipes, drank pretty deep draughts of the rich palm wine, and told in turn stories of our lives and adventures. The hut being only wattled, and that very imperfectly, the strong land breeze blew through and through it, causing the flame of our solitary lamp to waver and flicker, and not unfrequently putting it out altogether. We sat upon bundles made of our clothes, or heaps of dried grass, and must, in sooth, have appeared a parcel of strange ragamuffins, with our faces burnt to mahogany colour by the sun; our hair and beards long, tangled, and matted; and our clothes, being coarse doublets and short jackets, cut in uncouth shapes, and often red and greasy with the blood and fat of the animals which it was our business to kill. Stout Jem being reckoned the head and commander of

our party, sat on a kind of settle for a throne, and the rest of us crowded as near the great chest as we could, the two Mosquito men excepted, who commonly sat apart squatted on their hams, and speaking to each other softly in their own tongue. Sometimes we would play dice on these evenings, not for money, of which we had none, but for the carcasses of the cattle which we had killed and flayed; but as the play was always fair and the dice true, it was generally found that no one either lost or gained much in the long run. It was, however, the story-telling nights I loved the best. Many of the tales then told were indeed very vulgar and common, and unworthy of being recorded, turning solely upon butcheries of the Spaniards at sea, and upon great seasons of debauch, after a successful cruise, in Tortugas or Jamaica. Not a few tales were also told of ghosts and omens, and such extravagances, which the superstitious nature of sailors causes them to believe and to hearken greedily to. I heard many such histories both at this time and afterwards, and I design to insert one here, not because I think it at all credible, but because it is a very good specimen of the histories of ghosts, phantoms, and other supernatural appearances which were current among the Buccaneers. This story was told by Stout Jem very solemnly, and listened to with no less eagerness; and in

recounting it I will endeavour to put the matter into the narrator's words, of which, for an uncultivated seaman, he had a good flow. Stout Jem called his history "The Legend of Foul-Weather Don," and to it I will devote the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LEGEND OF FOUL-WEATHER DON.

STOUT Jem told it thus :—

“ My story, mates, is a strange one, and I say not whether it be true or false. I heard it in the middle watch, one fine night, slipping down the coast of Porto Rico, and the seaman who told it to us, said, that when he was a boy he sailed with the man to whom the thing happened, in a big ship which hailed from Bristol. That the spirits of the dead walk the world—ay, and sail the seas—is a thing I cannot say nay to. I cannot tell you that I ever saw anything of the sort myself, but credible mariners and grave and sober men have assured me of things which have made my marrow creep, and the hair stand up, all bristling out of my flesh. Well, then, about this story. The man to whom the adventure happened, was by name Ned Purvis, a mariner. It

must be nigh sixty years ago since he sailed out of the port of London, on a trading voyage to the coast of Guinea. Purvis was then a youngster, there being little better than a year since he had followed the sea, and this was his first voyage abroad; he having undertaken it in the ship of his uncle, a good old man, of a mild disposition, and well loved of the crew. As for Ned Purvis, he was a reckless, ruffling blade, that cared neither for man nor devil, when his blood was up, and who thought but little of the glimmer of a drawn cutlas, or the flash of a pistol, in a quarrel. But as I told you, mates, the old man, the captain, was mild of speech and of heart, and greatly loved his nephew, and thought much of the lad's spunk and wild spirit. So they sailed southerly, as became navigators, bound as they were to traffic for spices and rich oils and gold with the blacks of Africa.

“Having lost sight of England, they had prosperous winds and pleasant weather, and nought occurred until the seventh day from that in which they saw the last of the white cliffs. Then they were just moving through the water and no more, for the breeze was but a puff, and the sun going down, when all of a sudden they saw a boat with a man it, so close aboard that you might toss a biscuit into her. It was curious, mates, that almost all the men on deck saw her at once, when she was,

as it might be, alongside; and yet no one had seen her approaching. But strange as that was, comrades, it was not so strange as the cut of the boat, and, for that matter, the cut of the man in her. The stem and stern of the craft were very high, and ended in curled bits of carved wood. Her gunwale, too, was all carved and sculptured, in such a way as you may have seen the pulpits and choirs of cathedrals and abbeys, and such buildings in England and France, and the Low Countries, being very artificial work done with gravers and chisels.

“Ned Purvis remembered afterwards, when he saw a great Spanish painting of Christopher Columbus, landing on his second voyage upon the island of Hispaniola, that the admiral sailed in a barge, carved and ornamented after the fashion of that, of which I am now telling you. And the man, mates, looked as old as his boat. He had on a high conical hat, with a feather in it, and he wore a grave coloured doublet, of an old fashion, with slashes in the arms, and brocaded flowers embroidered thereon. Round his neck was a stiff ruff. He had red stockings, and great bunches of ribbon in his shoes. The face of this strange person was severe and grave. He had no moustaches, but a thin peaked beard which fell over his frill. Every now and then he smiled with a strange, wild expression, which was that

of a bitter sneer ; and his eyes shot a sparkling light, which was stony and cold, and from which men turned their heads, as if by instinct. Well, then, the captain when he saw this queer cruizer, seemed fascinated and gazed upon him, as you may have seen small birds on the boughs gaze at snakes, whose eyes glitter out of the grass beneath, and presently the man in the boat waved his arm, as a signal to those on board to take him in. Well, no one stirred but Ned Purvis, and before the old captain could prevent him, Ned flung a rope to the stranger, who straightway caught hold of it and mounted on deck.

“ ‘ Where is your captain ? ’ says he, in a hollow harsh voice.

“ The old man comes forward, as pale as a corpse, and quoth he—

“ ‘ In the name of God, what want ye on board my ship ? ’

“ Now, at the name of God, Ned Purvis thought that the strange man started and shook ; but he replied not, only taking the old Captain by the hand, pointed to his boat, which was towing astern.

“ ‘ Men,’ said the old mariner, faintly—‘ he will not be denied, get his boat aboard.’

“ But the crew slunk together in a body, and murmured to each other, but put not a hand to rope or tackle. Then Ned Purvis stood forward.

“ ‘ Who are you,’ said he, ‘ and why should we take you or your boat aboard?’ ”

“ ‘ You yourself asked me,’ quoth the strange man ; ‘ you flung the rope ; but for that I should have floated past you. I never come, but where some one welcomes me.’ ”

“ Now, at this, Ned Purvis confessed that he felt like a great sinner, and all the men turned round and looked, first at him and then at the stranger. But Ned plucked up courage, and determined to give them all bold words. So he walked up to the stranger, and said—

“ ‘ Well, I did heave you a rope ; no true-hearted mariner would see a man adrift upon the ocean, and not offer him rescue. I care little what you be. If you are our fellow-creature, we have done but our duty in saving you ; if you be not ; why, we are honest men here, having no crime upon our consciences, and we defy the devil and all his works. Come, shipmates, lend a hand, and heave the old gentleman’s barge aboard. It’s the captain’s orders, and orders must be obeyed.’ ”

“ And so, after a little grumbling and murmuring, the boat was hove aboard and placed between the masts. There was neither food nor water in her, and her bottom was as foul with barnacles and sea-weed, as if she had drifted ten times round the world. Meantime, the stranger and the

Captain went below, and the men stood in a group round the cabin, but they could hear nought of what took place there, and presently they retired to their usual posts. Well, Ned Purvis was in the first watch, and when it got dark he was standing leaning against the main-chains, wondering at the strange event of the day, when the Captain touched him on the shoulder.

“ ‘Nevvy!’ says the old man, ‘know you whom you have brought aboard into this ship?’ ”

“ ‘Why, uncle,’ answered Ned, somewhat taken aback at this address, ‘ought we not to take aboard any man we find starving in a boat upon the ocean, more than a week’s sail from land?’ ”

“ ‘Ay, nevvv,’ quoth the old captain, ‘any man, but not any phantom; it is more than an hundred years since the passenger you brought on board this unhappy ship was a man!’ ”

“ ‘Do you know him, then, uncle?’ says Ned; ‘have you ever seen him before?’ ”

“ ‘Ay, boy,’ replied the old mariner, ‘once, when I was a youth, he boarded a ship in which I sailed, as he did ours to-day.’ ”

“ ‘And what did he?’ asked the young sailor, his heart fluttering within him.

“ ‘Raised storms,’ said the elder Purvis, solemnly; ‘raised a tempest such as I never saw before, and had hoped, until now, never to see again.’ ”

“ ‘Then, in the name of God,’ says Ned, clenching his fists, ‘as I brought him on board, I’ll pitch him overboard, and I’ll begin with his boat first.’ And so saying, he began to make fast a tackle to the curled prow.

“ ‘Hold, hold!’ said Captain Purvis; ‘he must go by his own free will, or he will not go at all.’

“ ‘But who—who, in the devil’s name, is he, uncle?’ shouted Ned.

“ ‘He is a restless phantom—a wandering, unquiet spirit,’ says the old seaman, with his voice trembling, and his grey hair all dank with the cold sweat. ‘He was a cruel captain of Spain, who, holding a high command in Hispaniola, wrought great cruelties to the natives, and even to his fellow-countrymen, amassing thus a great treasure, which he buried in one of the small keys or desert islands of the Western Indies, to wait an opportunity of conveying it to Spain; at length, this seemed to have arrived, and in a stout vessel he set sail for the treasure island; but on the voyage a terrible fever fixed upon him, and having partially recovered, he found his memory so gone that he could not recal to his mind any signs by which he knew, either the island, or the part of it where the treasure lay. Notwithstanding, however, he would continue to cruize for weeks and weeks among the cluster called the Virgin Isles, to the east of Porto Rico, never sleeping,—so they

said who sailed with him, but always standing on the highest yard, gazing wistfully for his treasure he had buried. At length, his crew lost patience, and insisted upon returning to Hispaniola ; at this he fell into furious fits of rage, but at last, they being obstinate, he swore a solemn oath that, dead or alive, he would sail the sea until his treasure was either found and spent, or placed for ever beyond the reach of men. And then, ordering them to put out a boat, stepped on board, and they left him floating, an hundred years ago, just as we found him this afternoon.'

" ' But he has been seen since,' quoth Ned, after a pause, for he did not know what to think of this story.

" ' Twice, that I know of,' said his uncle, ' and once, I tell you, I saw him, and he came on board and brought tempest with him ; they called him, ' Foul-Weather Don,' and learned men say he must keep his oath, in the spirit if not in the body, and that he will have no rest till the terms of it be fulfilled.'

" ' So he brought bad weather, did he ?' said Ned, musing.

" ' For the three weeks he was on board,' says the old man, ' the blast never lulled, and the sea ran higher than the mainyard.'

" ' And what did he do all that time ?' cries Ned, again.

“‘He sat in the great cabin,’ replied the uncle, ‘with his back against the rudder case, and never spoke word nor broke bread.’

“‘How did he leave you?’ was Ned’s next question.

“‘He rose one evening, just in the twilight, and ordered the captain to put his boat into the water, though none of us thought a boat would live in such a sea, and none built by man’s hand could. But that one’—and the old sailor pointed to the sea-worn craft, with her bottom one bed of weed and barnacles—‘but that one floated like a duck upon the great breaking seas; and presently, with grave courtesy and farewell gesture, Foul-Weather Don stepped to the gangway, and from thence on board his skiff. We saw him once or twice rising on the tops of the great seas, and standing up in the boat with his hands clasped, as one praying; then boat and all disappeared, and we saw him no more. The next hour the gale broke, the sea went down, and we were again enabled to lay our proper course.’

“‘And what is Foul-Weather Don doing in the cabin just now?’ says Ned.

“‘Sitting with his back against the rudder case,’ answered Captain Purvis, ‘and see—look there!’ the old man added, and he pointed to the east, ‘look at that bank of clouds rising from the ocean—there’s the gale coming. Before midnight

Foul-Weather Don will have all his winds blowing about him.'

"With this, mates, Ned Purvis walked away forward, and pondered long and deeply. The rest of the crew were whispering in groups upon the forecastle, and the poor old captain was standing wringing his hands beside the magic boat. So presently Ned spoke to two or three of the men, and they shook hands with him and promised to stand by him. Then he went down to his berth and took out a great pistol, and carefully examined the lock and cleaned it; afterwards he opened his chest, and produced from it a bright Spanish dollar; this he hammered into a round ball, and with it, instead of a leaden bullet, he loaded the pistol. So presently, armed in this fashion, he came on deck, the men following him by ones and twos, and marched right to the door of the great cabin. His uncle met him at the door. 'What do you want here?' quoth the old man; 'take my advice, and let him alone.'

"'No,' says Ned, 'I brought him here, and I'll make you rid of him;' and so saying, he put the old man aside, and entered the cabin. It was almost dark, but the light from the binnacle came down through the sky-light, and showed the strange passenger sitting there, as the captain had described, with his back to the rudder-case.

"Ned Purvis marched heavily in, and the phantom, or whatever it was, looked up at him, and so they remained for more than a minute staring into each other's eyes. The men were watching them over each other's shoulders at the door.

"'Foul-Weather Don,' says Ned at last, as bold as steel, 'you're more free than welcome.'

The spectre took no notice.

"'I hove the rope to you,' says Ned, 'and I thought I was doing an act of duty by my fellow-creature. But now, I hear, that there's no living blood in your veins, and that you roam the ocean, bringing bad weather on the mariners you fall in with. That may be true, or it may not. If not, say so, and say who you are. If you be a shipwrecked man, you are welcome here; but if not, men have told me that a silver bullet can wound even a ghost, and if you do not speak in time, by God, there is a rare chance now of testing the truth of the saying. Answer!'

"And Ned cocked the great pistol and levelled at the strange passenger. The figure never moved a muscle of its wan stern face.

"'Take the dollar and my blessing with it, then,' shouted Ned, and he drew the trigger.

"The pistol exploded, and for a moment the cabin was so full of smoke, that they could not see what execution had been done. When the vapour cleared a little off, Foul-Weather Don was stand-

ing up, his stony eyes giving out their cold sparkle, more horribly than ever.

“‘You gave me your benison,’ he screeched out, ‘I give you my malison; and the executors and the tokens of it will follow you night and day, until either my fate or yours be accomplished. If you do not believe me, go on deck, look over either quarter, and see if I do not speak sooth.’

“These, mates, were the very words of Foul-Weather Don; for I have got all the conversations which relate to the matter by heart, as they were told to me. And so Ned and the rest of them being terribly startled, tumbled up on deck, one tripping up the other in their hurry; and the first thing they did was to stare into the sea, where the phantom had told them to look, when sure enough they saw the fins of two great blue sharks, awful monsters in size, keeping way steadily with the ship; and just as Ned came on deck, they gave a sort of frisky plunge in the water, as much as to say, ‘There *you* are—very good; and here *we* are!’

“To make a long story short, mates, before midnight, such a gale was blowing from the eastward, that there was nothing for it but to put the ship before the wind; and not only that day but that week, and for three weeks after that, did the hurricane, for it was little else, continue, blowing the ship entirely out of her course, until at length,

the captain and crew knew that they had sailed from near the coast of Africa to the coast of America, and that if the wind did not soon take off, they would be run plump ashore, either on the continent or one of the islands. Meanwhile Foul-Weather Don, as before, never rose from the cabin, nor broke bread nor spoke word. Indeed, if he were talkative, he had no one but himself to hold converse with; for captain, quartermaster, mates, and all, lived forward, and gave up the cabin to the phantom passenger. But Foul-Weather Don was not the only thing which stuck to the ship. The sharks kept way with her as steadily in the thundering gale as in the light breeze. The crew could see them occasionally, plunging along in the troughs of the sea, one on each quarter, and keeping their places as exactly as if they were towing after the ship. Well, all hands got low and mopish. The old captain was fairly unmanned; and even Ned Purvis, dare-devil as he was, began to quail. At last, they knew by their reckoning, and by the look of the sky towards sundown, that they were approaching the land, and that one way or the other their fate would soon be settled. So one evening, the men were gathered in groups, watching the signs of the sky, and pointing out to each other right ahead the warm coloured clouds which sailors know hang over the land. The weather

looked as wild as ever; the scud above flew even faster than the waves below; and you should have seen the battered look of the craft as she went staggering along, under a rag of canvas, which was becalmed every moment in the troughs of the sea. Indeed the ship looked almost a wreck. Her bulwarks had been washed away long ago, the hatchways were all battened down. Out of three boats she had carried, only one was left, being strongly lashed to the deck, while the sea-battered skiff of Foul-Weather Don, although there was not so much as a rope yarn to make it fast, had never budged for all the great seas, which had been for weeks rolling over and over the decks, so that the men were obliged to lash themselves to ringbolts, and to the masts, and never could light a fire, or wear a stitch of dry clothing.

“Well, as I was saying, the poor fellows were holding on as well as they could, and wondering where the ship and they themselves would be to-morrow by that time, when the two seamen, who were taking their turn at the helm ropes, gave a loud shout, and the rest turning about, saw Foul-Weather Don standing upon the deck.

“‘He’s going — he’s going,’ whispered old Captain Purvis. ‘The Lord hath preserved us in his great goodness.’

“Well, Foul-Weather Don looked eagerly about

as if he expected to find his treasure island, and then he mounted the rigging—all the crew holding their breath and watching him—and gazed from the maintop long and sadly. At length, he made a sort of motion of despair, and came down to the deck, where he stood wringing his hands. All at once he turned to Captain Purvis, and motioned for his boat to be hoisted into the sea. In a minute, mates, the tackles were manned, and they let the skiff go smash into the water, with a surge that would have burst another boat into staves. But only the devil, mates, could swamp a craft like that; she floated alongside as light as a well-corked bottle,

“‘Haul your wind, when the elements will allow you,’ says the Don, quite solemnly.

“‘Thank you for nothing,’ quoth Ned Purvis. ‘I should think we would, when you have brought us across the ocean against our will.’

“But the spectre replied not a word, and seemed to glide rather than to clamber over the ship’s side into the boat. When he was fairly aboard, Ned Purvis bellowed out, ‘Take your sharks with you, Foul-Weather Don, they are fitter company for you than for Christians.’

“But there was no reply, and in a minute the phantom and his boat glanced away from the ship’s side, and the last the crew saw of her was a black speck with a figure in it, in the very crest

of a breaking wave. Just as this happened, and they were beginning to breathe freely, one of the men shouted 'Land!' and sure enough, the next time they rose upon a sea, they saw right in the glare of the setting sun the dusky coast line of an island. In an hour after, the gale broke, lulling fast, so that before midnight they had courses and stay-sails on the ship, she lying-to with her head to the eastward. You know, mates, that in hot countries it is up wind, up sea, down wind, down sea, so that by sunrise the next day there was nothing but a great smooth swell to show that a gale had just swept across the wide Atlantic. The first thing Ned Purvis did when he came on deck to take the morning watch, was to look over the quarter, and he confessed afterwards that his heart felt sick when he saw the two blue sharks still alongside swimming close to the surface. The other seamen saw the creatures too, and they looked at Ned, and whispered among themselves.

"Well, you may be sure that, after such a run as the ship had had across the Atlantic, she wanted refitting, and the crew wanted vegetable food, and rest; so that, when the usual trade wind came to blow, and they found from one or two fishing canoes that they were amongst the most northern of the Windward islands, they cruised about, looking for a convenient beach to land at, and to re-

fresh themselves. All this time, mates, the sharks kept their places as steadily as the very masts. Ned fished for them in vain. He even baited the hook with the choicest pieces of pork and beef aboard, but they would not as much as push the morsel with their snouts. 'No, no,' said the men, when they saw this; 'the creatures have their orders, and they obey them.' Then Ned tried the harpoon, but though he had often speared porpoises and dolphins, he could not make a hit at the sharks; either the ship lifted or lurched, or the ravenous animals glided aside, or the water made the spear glance; but, however it was, Ned confessed that he could not even scratch their dingy backs.

"Upon this, there was little but black looks and murmuring words in the ship. Poor old Captain Purvis was at his wit's end, and the crew, although they used to love poor Ned, now began to look at him as though he were a Jonas, and Ned knew it.

" 'The curse,' said the men, 'is following us in a visible shape. There can be no good luck for ship, or crew, or cargo, with such a couple of attendants swimming astern.'

"Well, Ned tried hard to laugh it off, but he could not succeed, and his arguments were of as little avail. 'Why,' he would say, 'they can't jump aboard, messmates; the ocean is theirs as

well as ours, and if a cat may look at a king, I don't see why a shark may not look at a ship.'

"But though he spoke in this tone, I can tell you that Ned was but ill at ease himself. Well, this lasted three days, and all that time they were cruising about among the islands, looking for a place which would be snug to anchor in, and out of the way of Spanish ships. On the third day, when the ship was about a league from a small sandy isle or key, the men noticed that the sharks came closer to her than ever, as if they were getting more and more watchful of their prey. This made the pot boil over, and the boatswain and three-fourths of the crew went to the captain in a body, and said that Ned must leave the ship that hour, for that he was a doomed man, and that a doomed man made a doomed ship. There was land close to, they said. Mr. Purvis would get plenty of water and provisions, and he might soon get his passage off in another ship, but whether he did or not, he must go ashore now. Old Purvis tried to argue the thing, but the men would not hear his words, and in the middle of the hubbub, Ned comes forward, frankly, and says—

" 'Messmates, I have brought misfortune on the ship, and spoiled the voyage; I am willing to land.'

"On hearing this, Captain Purvis wished to follow his nephew, but they would not let him, because

he was the only good navigator they would have, after Ned went away, in the ship. So, presently, the remaining boat was launched, and beef, and biscuit, and water, sufficient for two months at least, were put in her, with a musket, and ammunition, and a shovel, that Ned might have the means of digging for water. When the boat shoved off, the sharks followed, on which Ned, pointing to them, shouted to his uncle to be of good cheer, for they would meet again, and that the ship was now free of bad omens. The boat landed in a little cove, and Ned stepped on shore with his gun in his hand. The men placed his provisions and the shovel upon the beach, and shook hands with him; and as they rowed back to the ship, they gave him a cheer for his stout heart. Well, when they were gone, Ned began to look around him, and truly he was alone in a desolate place. Most of the island appeared to be sand, upon which, in some places, there were great banks of Bahama grass growing, and about a rood from him there was a little hill, with bushes in it, and one very old tree at the top. What rejoiced Ned, however, was to see plenty of turtles sleeping on the sand, and numerous birds. Well, he lived here nigh a fortnight, sleeping under a rock in a sort of cave, which was cool and pleasant, and looking out in vain for a ship. All this time the sharks kept cruising along the shore, and

Ned used to amuse himself by flinging great stones on them from the top of rocks rising out of the sea. One day, however, having climbed the little hill, and sat down under the tree, he observed a curious thing. The tree, which must have been dead near a century, and which was all covered with moss, had several withered branches, to which cross pieces of wood had been rudely fastened, but in such a way that, unless you looked very closely, you would have thought that such was the natural growth of the tree. But at two hours, or thereby, after noon every day, these branches cast shadows as of six crosses, all in a circle on the sand. It was after Ned observed this that he climbed the tree, and found that the crosses were artificial. Then all at once it struck him that they were meant for marks, and then he thought that something might be buried there. Well, mates, off he goes for his shovel, and sets to work at once. It was hot work digging in that climate, but he very soon scraped the lid of a great chest made of ironwood, and bound with hasps and clasps of metal.

“ ‘By all the stars,’ quoth Ned, ‘ who knows but this is Foul-Weather Don’s treasure chest.’

“ Mates, I believe it was. Ned soon wrenched the lid off, and there he saw great ingots and rough lumps of gold, and precious stones, just as they were dug up from the mines in Cuba and

Hispaniola by the Indians for the Spaniards. There they had lain for a hundred years, and no man the wiser or the better.

“‘Aha,’ says Ned, ‘I would fain have you in England, but what am I to do with you here?’

“However, he made shift to carry the wealth, lump by lump, down to his cave near the sea; then he brought the box and stowed the gold as before, covering all over with loose sand. The very next morning, mates, Ned on awaking saw a small bark; he did not know what she was, becalmed, not a mile from the shore, waiting for the sea-breeze. So he mounted a rock, fired his gun, waved a handkerchief, and shouted. Presently, a boat pulled off from the bark, and Ned went down to the cove to meet her. There were a couple of men in the boat, of what nation I know not, but the vessel to which they belonged was a turtler, from one of the large windward islands—Martinico, I believe. So Ned told them, that he had been marooned for striking the quarter-master of the ship in which he sailed, and asked them if they would give him a passage to any port where he could ship for England. So the turtlers consulted together, and asked him if he had wherewithal to pay his passage. Upon which Ned, who cared nothing at all for money, took them into his cave, and showed them the treasure-chest. At the sight of it, the turtlers stared, as

well they might, and most readily agreed to take off Ned and his gold at once. The three set to work, and presently the boat was loaded almost to the water's edge with riches. The turtlers went about like men in a dream, and they were only roused from a sort of stupid bewilderment, when they had rowed the boat out of the cove, and found her so heavy, that they feared she should be swamped by the heave of the sea.

" 'Lord!' says one of them, 'see there—if the boat were to fill and go down. Did you ever see more fearful monsters?'

" And sure enough there were Ned's old friends swimming on each side of the boat, as though they were appointed the guardians of the treasure. However, no accident happened, and as they neared the turtling ship, the sailors cried out, that they were coming on board with treasure enough to buy a kingdom.

" You may think for yourselves, mates, how the entire crew of the bark, which carried about half-a-dozen men, received their freight. Ned told the simple truth as to how he had got it, and the turtler, immediately that the sea-breeze came, stood away for Martinico, the two sharks following as usual. Gold, mates, is a thing that makes demons out of men. The big chest stood upon the deck, and the crew hung round it, and would hardly work

the ship. Presently, they began to handle and weigh the lumps, and dispute about their value. Ned saw that a storm was brewing, and fearing that he would be stabbed, or flung overboard to the sharks astern, so as to be no bar to a distribution of the wealth, stood forward and said, that they were as much entitled to the gold as he, for if he had found it, they had given him the means of turning it to use. Well, at this speech they professed great satisfaction, and swore that Ned was an honest man and a good comrade, and that as he said, so it would be done. But it was clear that they all distrusted each other. Ned saw them whispering and caballing, and once or twice he observed a man concealing a knife in his garment, so that the haft came handy to his grasp. All this time the sharks were following steadily in the wake, and Ned did not like the look of the weather, for great black clouds were gathering in the sky. Still the men were looking sourer and sourer at each other, and gradually drawing off into two parties, one on each side of the chest—the twain watching each other warily. Ned tried to remonstrate with them, and told them that they ought to take in sail, for the weather looked threatening. But they ordered him to mind his own business, and said, they had not taken him on board to be captain over them.

So Ned sat on the weather-bulwark, looking very uneasily to windward. Mates, you have all seen a squall in these seas, and you know how it comes. The weather getting very thick, the men forming each group, began to whisper, and, then, all at once, as if they had made up their minds, they gave a loud shout, and made a rush at the box; as they did so, they drew knives and snicker-snees, and cut and chopped at each other, struggling and cursing over the chest. Ned saw the blood splash down on the gold, and he rushed forward to separate them, crying out—"Mad-men, that you are—look out for the squall first and fight afterwards."

"But it was too late, mates. The sky got black, and with a loud roar, the squall came, tearing up the sea before it, and in the very centre of the flying foam Ned swore he saw Foul-Weather Don, with his arms stretched forth, as if in triumph. In an instant the blast struck the sails, heaving the turtler bodily on her broadside, and as she lurched over, the heavy box of gold fetched away with a mighty surge, and went crashing through and through the frail bulwark, and then with a great plunge down to the bottom of the ocean, there to lie, mates, even until the day when the sea shall give up its dead! All this passed in a moment, and the next instant, the ship as though

relieved by having cast forth the guilty gold, righted with a heavy roll, which sent the seamen sprawling across the deck, with their knives in their hands, and bloody gashes in their faces and limbs. The squall was over, and the sun burst out; Ned rushed to the lee-beam, and saw just where the gold had fallen into the sea, the bottom of a boat all covered with barnacles, and sea-weed which he knew well. She seemed now saturated and rotten with water, for the charm was off her, mates, and while Ned gazed at her, she went gradually down into the great depths of the sea, and the sharks sunk out of sight with her. As they disappeared, Ned felt a heavy load leave his heart, and he thought that he had got cheaply rid of it, even at the expense of the gold. The curse was taken off him, and he rather surprised the turtlers, who were standing looking very like fools, by cutting a set of capers on the deck. The first thing they did was to try for soundings, but the line ran out every fathom, and the lead touched no bottom. So they lengthened the cord, with every piece of loose rope in the ship, but the sea appeared unfathomable. The gold was sunk in a gulf from which no power of man could raise it; and so at length, mutually cursing and blaming each other, they wore the ship round, and stood back to pursue their turtling cruise.

From that time to this, mates, no mariner has ever seen Foul-Weather Don. Ned Purvis got safely back to England, and, as I informed you already, he told this tale aboard the Bristol ship to him who made it known to me. Regarding its truth, I leave every man to judge for himself."

CHAPTER IX.

THE AUTHOR, WITH SUNDEY OF HIS COMEADES, SET OUT FOR THE CREEK WHERE HE LEFT HIS BARK, AND THERE BRAVELY CAPTURED A SPANISH SCHOONER.

NEARLY a month passed away since the evening on which I listened to the story of Foul-Weather Don, and no ship had yet passed within a dozen miles of the mouth of the bay. So all hands began to grow very impatient, and divers schemes were proposed, such as shifting our quarters to some other point of the coast, where we might have better luck. It was then that I, for the first time, called to mind the boat which I had left in the creek, where I first landed on the island. Now, as I had heard many stories of Buccaneers putting to sea in boats or canoes, and boarding and capturing Spanish vessels, it occurred to me, that if we could get possession of the Frenchman's skiff, we could divide our party between it and

the canoe, leaving ample room for the stowage of provisions and water for a cruise. This scheme I imparted to Stout Jem, by whom it was received with approbation. We were nine in number, well armed, and therefore of quite sufficient force to capture any Spaniard, not a man of war, which we were likely to fall in with. It was therefore resolved that Le Picard, one of our Frenchmen, Blue Peter, and Nicky, should start, under my guidance, for the cove to the westward, and if we found the boat, should navigate her round the coast to the bay, where the rest of the party would be prepared with provisions and water, ready to stow on board, so that, in company with the canoe, we could put to sea at once. No time was lost in putting the scheme into execution. Meinheer, who knew something of sail-making, cut out a small square sail or lug, which we were to carry with us, and which would suit the boat, it being easy for us to cut and fashion a mast and yard after we had found her. We also carried a good-sized keg for water, and a small quantity of beef and cassava bread, trusting chiefly, however, to our guns for our subsistence.

We set out by moonlight, intending to sleep during the heat of the day; and after an hour's trudge through the wet grass and bushes, which were quite drenched with the copious dews, passed the spot where lay the Buccaneers who had been

hanged by the Spaniards. Truly, our poor comrades slept in a tranquil resting-place—a spot of greenest grass, with feathery palms overhead, bending and rustling in the night wind. We stopped to rest, when the sun rose, until the sea-breeze should set in, watching its coming from beneath a thick mango-tree, whence we could look down upon the blue sea beneath. After the land-breeze flickered and failed, there was a pause, during which the sun shone with blistering power. Then, far off, on the glassy surface of the sea, came the dark belt of roughened water, streaked with white, which proclaims the daily return of the brisk north-westerly trade, and in half an hour more, it was whistling through the bushes in half a gale of wind. We dined this day by the little runnel where I had killed the duck, and then travelled until sunset, when we encamped in our blankets, well worn out by our long day's march. The journey to the cove was fatiguing, but performed without any particular adventure. We sometimes saw wild cattle, and heard the cry of wild dogs, and I observed, when we got glimpses of the sea, numerous great brown pelicans, flapping heavily over the water, somewhat like the cranes on our own coasts, and often diving down with a splash into the sea after the fish, which they mark from a great height. In the afternoon of the second day, I reckoned that

we could not be far from the cove, but the exact spot was difficult to hit, as the general appearance of the coast hereabouts was very similar, and the tangled growth of underwood prevented us from always keeping so close to the edge of the sea-cliff as we otherwise should have done. We had trudged along all the afternoon, keeping a sharp look-out, and sometimes forcing our way with our great knives through the creepers and brushwood, so as to be able to gaze down the iron-bound sea wall to where the great driving swells were rising and sinking upon the rock, and foaming furiously over every projecting peak and pinnacle of stone ; when, having stopped to hold a consultation—for I was now becoming very fearful that we had overshot our mark—we all suddenly heard the report of a musket or fowling-piece, fired not far off. This terribly disconcerted us, for we knew that the cove could not be distant, and we feared that the secret of its existence was not known to me alone. However, we withdrew into the thicket, where we could not well be discovered, and lay close. In the course of the next hour, we heard three shots fired from different points around us, and discoursed eagerly as to whether they were probably Buccaneers, or Spaniards who were hunting in the neighbourhood. At all events, we now despaired of recovering the boat, inasmuch as the great chance was that the hunters had

landed in my cove, as I called it, and would, of course, appropriate the skiff, if she still lay there, to their own purposes.

While we were talking lowly among ourselves, Blue Peter, the Mosquito-man, suddenly started up on his knees, and told us to listen. We did so, very intently, and presently heard a rustling and a snapping of dry twigs in the wood, but although we looked with all our eyes, we could see nothing.

"Tush!" says Nicky; "you are a fool, Peter! and take a wild pig for a Spaniard."

But the Indian seized his piece, cocked it, and suddenly levelling it, fired, before we could prevent him.

"Hush!" quoth he, very earnestly—"hush! and we will be safe."

"Safe!" said Nicky. "Why, if they are Spaniards, they will be down upon us in a twinkling."

"No," replied the Mosquito man—"no, no! They shooting all round: think my gun one of their camarados—eh?"

"The man is right," said Le Picard. "But what, in the name of the diable, have you fired at?"

"Me show you!" said Blue Peter; and he crawled into the underwood so circumspectly, that one scarcely heard a rustle, and presently, returning, flung the body of a huge dog among us.

"A Spanish blood-hound!" exclaimed Nicky; and we all recognised the fawn colour, with grim, black muzzle, and the great muscular limbs of the animal. But to put all question aside, the creature wore a leather collar, with a brass plate, on which was inscribed the name, "Manuel G. Alcansas," so it was quite clear, that we were surrounded by a hunting party of the enemy, and that, had it not been for the keen eye of the Indian, who observed the blood-hound, and shot it almost when it was in the act of giving tongue, we should probably have been massacred. We were all tolerably startled, and, after a hurried consultation, agreed that we might as well lie close where we were, as attempt to shift to less dangerous quarters, as by moving we might unwittingly run into the very jaws of death. At last we decided to climb up certain trees, the branches whereof interlaced, Blue Peter having first cut the throat of the dog, and scattered the blood copiously around, so that it would embarrass and destroy the scent of any other hound which might pass that way. He then flung the body up into the branches of a tree. Not long after we heard a voice halloing loudly, as we supposed for the slain dog, and some other shots were fired at a distance. However, the sun sank and the stars shone down through the leaves, and we still remained unmolested. Making ourselves

as comfortable as our position would permit, we munched our supper, of which, however, we could eat but little, for we suffered much from thirst. Fortunately, there was water enough in the keg to afford us a few mouthfuls a piece, but we were afraid to straggle abroad in search of more. With the grey dawn we were afoot, cautiously exploring the locality, and I had much ado to restrain a sudden burst of exclamation when I recognised the little hill, to the top of which I had climbed to look around, after scrambling up the precipitous banks of the cove. I now knew whereabouts we were, almost to a yard, and carefully guiding the rest, and taking great heed to make no noise, we made our way to the top of the very scaur or ravine, up which I had crept from the water. It was not easy, however, to make out whether the cove was empty, for the morning was yet dim and grey, and the trees grew thick below. We proceeded, however, moving in single file along the edge of the rock, which, as the reader remembers, was thickly covered with wood, such as bushes and parasitical plants, with great trees growing out of the rifts and cracks in the cliff, and bending over the water so that the branches of those on both sides interlacing, quite canopied the still deep sea beneath. As we clambered on by the edge of the precipice, a sound suddenly struck my ear with which I was too well ac-

quainted to be easily deceived—it was the flap of canvas. Nicky heard it as well as myself, and we all paused. The land wind was just beginning to die out, and only came in heavy dank puffs down from the hills. We waited for the next gust; it shook the dew from the branches in a great sparkling shower, and gave a great rustle, as it were, down the ravine, in the middle of which we again heard the flap of canvas, and a rattle as of reef points against a sail. Being guided by the sound, we proceeded a few paces onwards, and then coming to a comparatively clear bit of ground, we crawled upon our bellies to the edge of the cliff, and through the trees and boughs saw a small vessel with two masts, of the class called schooners, beneath. She was moored in the very centre of the cove, very snugly, being made fast by four hawsers, two a-head and two astern, to the trunks of trees growing near the water on either bank. She had two boats in the water, floating by her main chains, and one of them I immediately recognised to be the object of our journey. Here, then, was the vessel to whom the hunters, whose guns we had heard, evidently belonged; and, indeed, without other evidence, Nicky and Le Picard knew enough about the fashion of those seas to be sure that the schooner was Spanish built, she being, possibly, a fishing vessel from Cuba, although

what she did on the coast here, we could not well imagine. The question now, however, was how we were to act? Thinking themselves, no doubt, in security, there was not a single man awake upon deck ; but several stout fellows were lying asleep under canvas and tarpaulins upon the forecastle. Presently, after we had gazed our fill upon the schooner, Nicky asked our opinion as to whether it would be possible to clamber down to the water's edge, and make off with both boats before the crew awoke. But Le Picard thought the risk too great. Besides, he argued, when they miss the boats, they can chase us out to sea in the schooner, where we would infallibly be taken. While they were talking, I was turning over another plan in my own mind.

"Instead of taking the boats," quoth I, "why should we not take the ship?"

At this they all started, and reminded me that we were but four men, whereas the Spaniards might well be a dozen ; and they had dogs, too, fierce bloodhounds, of which Le Picard, in particular, professed a great horror.

"Look you," quoth I, "this is my plan. Yesterday the Spaniards were hunting ashore, and to-day it is very like that they will renew their pastime, leaving, perhaps, only one man, or perhaps not even that to take charge of the schooner ; for you see that she is moored very safely, and

with her bows pointing down the creek so as to be ready for a start. Now, look at her rigging; see, her jib can be hoisted in a moment, and her fore and mainsails can be set merely by letting go the brails, and running aft the sheets; for you observe that the gaffs are already hoisted, therefore the schooner is ready for sea. Now I know, in a general manner, the direction of the cove below. It runs for a little way parallel to the coast, and then turns to the right, and so opens up into the sea. What is there to prevent us boarding the schooner when she is left almost, if not quite, undefended, and so carrying her away?"

They all applauded this design, and the more we talked of it the better it seemed to be. The schooner was a trim-looking vessel, such as the Spaniards can build very well, and we judged from her shape that she was exceeding fast as well as easy to manage. Besides, the greater length of the cove running westward, what puffs of sea-breeze traversed it would be in our favour, and although there would necessarily be some risk when we had passed the elbow, and came to get the ship out in face of the swell, yet we determined at all events to make the experiment. Nothing venture nothing have, so we shook hands gaily, and thanked our stars for such a slice of good luck.

As in many other adventures, the first and most difficult duty which we had to perform was to wait, so we ensconced ourselves in thick bushes, where we could see without being easily discerned, and watched the Spaniards as keenly as hawks do larks. The sun was above the horizon about half an hour, when a man issued from the cabin, and tapped the deck loudly with a handspike. At this summons the sluggards on the forecastle began to stir themselves, and to crawl forth, one by one, yawning from under the sails, and presently three or four bloodhounds, who seemed to have been sleeping among them, came whining and stretching themselves from their warm nests. The man who had wakened the rest, then went round the schooner, and appeared to examine the state of the moorings. The aspect of things seemed to satisfy him, for he went below, and presently the crew had their breakfast, which they ate on deck—a couple of bowls of cocoa, or some such beverage, being carried aft to the cabin. Soon after this, we observed with great delight, a number of muskets and pistols brought on deck, at the sight of which, the grim bloodhounds yelped and bayed. The captain, as we called him then, appeared again; and after a long discourse, carried on with a great deal of gesticulation, the whole crew gathering round and handling the arms, the bloodhounds were

fed, and the skiff—my skiff—hauled alongside, no doubt to convey the hunters on shore. The captain then seemed to be giving orders to one of the crew, a stout fellow, who wore a great striped wool-len cap and had a long unsheathed knife in his girdle, and then the whole party, excepting the fellow with the knife and cap, tumbled into the boat, the bloodhounds leaping in along with them, and rowed towards the extreme head of the creek. The Spaniards numbered about a dozen, without including a boy whom they had with them, and of course weighed down the skiff until her gun-wale was almost at the water's edge. We were for a little time in some perturbation, lest they should chance to come our way. We heard them shouting, and laughing, and crashing through the boughs, as they made their way up the steep banks of the creek, and then the boat came floating down again to the schooner, with the boy paddling her. Meantime, the man with the striped cap had disappeared in a little cook-house or caboose, from the funnel of which a smoke began to rise; and the boy, having made fast the boat, went aft to the cabin, and presently returned with the bowls, which we had seen carried thither, empty. Now, as we had seen but one man come out of this cabin, and as breakfast had been served there for two, we considered that there were three persons left in charge of the ship, but

that one of these was probably sick or disabled. While we were making these observations, the reader may be sure that we also listened attentively, in order to find out in what direction the hunting party had proceeded; and presently, hearing shouts and the reports of guns very faintly, and gradually becoming more so, until they were no longer audible, we congratulated ourselves that the hunters were out of the way, and that so far, our task would be easy.

The next point was, how to get on board the schooner so suddenly and so quietly as to leave those in charge of her no opportunity of giving an alarm. First we thought of swimming, but Le Picard was not skilful at this exercise; and, besides, we saw the backs and snouts of several caymans, moving about in the water. Then Nicky proposed to swing ourselves aboard, by means of the warps, fixed to the trees; but on close examination, we found the banks so precipitous, that it would be very difficult to make our way to the ropes, without giving an alarm. We were thus in considerable perplexity, fearing our scheme would miscarry in the very outset, when I observed a means whereby we might, although at some risk, accomplish our end. I have said that the cove or creek was so narrow that the branches of the great trees, growing in the refts of the rock on either side, met and inter-

laced, and from these branches hung perpendicularly, like great ropes, many long tendrils or withes, very tough and strong. Now, as it chanced, one of these depending from a stout branch, swung close by the foretop-mast head of the schooner, dangling indeed to the cross-trees. I pointed this out to my comrades, and they all agreed that it would be very possible to clamber out upon the bough, and slide down the withe into the rigging; but that the deck must be clear when we made the attempt, otherwise we could not fail of being discovered. It was fortunate, therefore, that the man with the striped cap continued in the cook-house, where we heard him clattering amongst pots and pans, and concluded that he was preparing a meal for the men ashore. But, as Nicky said, when one cooks a dinner, one never knows who may eat it. The boy remained about the deck for some time, but at length went into the cabin, and, staying there, we concluded to make the venture. Fastening our guns across our shoulders, we again shook hands, and vowed to stand by each other to the death. Then we crept cautiously along, until we came to the tree, from which sprang the great branch, which we looked to be the first stage of our journey to the schooner's deck. This tree grew about a fathom beneath the edge of the rock, but it was easy to swing ourselves down to it, by the matted vegetation, which

clung to the face of the stone. Then, one after another, we crawled out upon the bough, which shook a little, but bore us bravely. The schooner was now right below, and not a living thing stirring on her decks. I was the first man, and Nicky was at my heels. The Indian came next, and the Frenchman brought up the rear. All of us whites being sailors, the feat was not difficult; and as for the Mosquito man, he could climb like a cat. Having satisfied myself that the withe was well attached to the bough, I first twined my legs round the former, and then grasping it, slid easily down, until my feet touched the cross-trees of the Spanish schooner, and in a moment my comrades were clustering around me, no alarm being as yet excited. After pausing a moment, to get firm grips of the stays, I gave the word, and the whole four slid like lightning down the ropes, hand over hand, as sailors say, and came with a great bounce upon deck together. Le Picard instantly leaped to the cook-house, and the Spaniard coming out at the same moment, the Frenchman dealt him a blow with the butt-end of a heavy pistol, which flung him backwards, quite stunned upon the deck, while Nicky and I ran to the cabin, meeting at the threshold, the boy, and a comely woman, very dark, and with the blackest eyes I ever saw, who directly set up a great shriek of dismay.

But Nicky and I, pointing to the cabin and drawing forth pistols, made them understand that they must go below and be silent, as they valued their lives. The boy slunk back directly, and the woman turned to a livid paleness, and, swooning away, would have fallen down the ladder, but we supported her and laid her on the cabin floor; then, directly running on deck, we shut down the hatch. All this hardly occupied a moment; and, seeing *Le Picard* and *Blue Peter* cutting the warps forward, we drew our knives, and, working with good will, soon severed the tough plies of hemp, aft, and the schooner was unmoored. We waited a moment with great impatience, to see if she would drift, but, remaining stationary, we ran up the jib, and slackened the brails of the mainsail, so as, without actually setting the sail, to expose a good breadth of canvas, but it hung idly; the sea breeze had not yet set in, or if it had it did not reach us in the depths of the creek. We therefore, flung a long line into the lightest of the two boats alongside, and *Blue Peter* and Nicky leaping into it, pulled with all their strength for the elbow at which the creek tended seawards, and made the line fast to a tree there, while *Le Picard* and I hauled upon the warp, and soon saw that the schooner was obeying the impulse thus given to her, and slowly moving through the water. In a twinkling, our

comrades leaped on board again, and added their strength to ours, all of us working with clenched teeth and breathless eagerness. Just then, turning to look at the wounded Spaniard, who was sprawling upon the deck, I felt a breath of cool air on my face, the jib-sheet rattled, the light canvas swelled out, and in a moment the mainsail moved out of its sleepy folds, and the warp upon which we were hauling slackened. The schooner felt the puff, and I ran aft and took the helm, steering her in close by the starboard shore, which, when we turned seawards, would be the weather side of the cove. The mingled trees and rocks seemed to glide away from us. I looked over the side, and saw the bubbles rippling in the transparent water; and as I lifted my head again, I started with delight to feel the first heaving of the schooner, as she began to meet the lazy swell. The elbow, or turn of the creek, was not more than the length of the schooner ahead of us, and my three comrades all ran to the bows to watch the depth of water, and shouted that we might graze the rocks. Therefore I ported my helm, so as to send the vessel close in, and just as we slowly opened the corner I put the tiller hard down, and being fortunately a very handy craft for steering, she gradually swung round, and we all uttered a shout together as we saw, at the end of a short rocky passage, the open sea, streaked with the white bars of

breaking waves. But we were not out yet: almost immediately on rounding the point of the creek a gust of the sea breeze struck us on the starboard bows, making the jib rattle and flap like thunder, and directly the head of the schooner fell off towards the rocks on the leeward side. The Frenchman exclaimed that we must take to the boats after all, but Nicky answered him, "Yes—but only to carry a warp to the rocks at the mouth of the creek!" No sooner said than done. Another line was flung into the skiff, and Nicky and the Indian went with three strokes to the weather extremity of the creek. Here the surf was beating violently, coming with great lashing surges round the corner of the cliff, and causing the water to rise and fall more than a fathom with every undulation of the sea. Here was a jagged pinnacle of rock beaten by the waves, which every now and then burst right above it; over this the Indian with great dexterity cast a loose hitch of the line, while we on board, running to the schooner's bows, hauled upon it as before. It was lucky for us that the sea-breeze only blew up the ravine in uncertain puffs, and that the place was full of counter-currents, and eddies of air, which first filled our sails one way and then another, as we heaved and rolled upon the broken swells which dashed from side to side of the channel. We worked at the warp like desperate men, as, in-

deed, we were. Every now and then a sudden toss of the water would fling us back ; but then the counter reflection of the seas from the opposite wall of rock would jerk us forward, and we soon found that we were gradually making our way towards the mouth of the cove, keeping so close to the weather side, that every now and then the masts, when flung over to starboard, rattled among the bushes overhead, and sent down showers of leaves, which would fly in uncertain whirls and dives amongst the rigging. At last, the decisive moment came. In a minute we would be hove upon the leeward entrance of the cove, or be out clear at sea. I ran again to take the helm. Le Picard and the Indian, running to the weather fore-chains, gave a last surge upon the line by way of a launch. The schooner's head plunged into the trough of the sea, not a fathom from the rocks, and as she rose—her bows drew beyond the shelter of the cove—the full blast of the sea-breeze caught her jib—and her head swung again to leeward.

“ Help her with the foresail, comrades !” I shouted. They had anticipated me—the Indian letting go the brails, and then helping the whites to draw aft the sheet. The sail surged and flapped so as to shake the schooner to her very keel, and the great sheet-block jerked madly to and fro with bounds which would have dashed through a strong wall. But still, though they could not yet

master the canvas, the schooner was not insensible to its lifting power, and I felt her, as she rose with her broadside to a great clear sea, gather way, and start as it were from under me. There was just a moment of terrible suspense. The masts bent to leeward until their trucks were within a couple of fathoms of the lee promontory. You could almost leap on the great rough masses of wet stone, which lay close a-beam, and then in a moment the schooner rose to another sea, all three sails now bellying to the wind, and once more hove clear of the land, although I saw through the clear water a glimpse of reef under our counter, which the keel must have scraped, and although the head of the mainmast actually tore away the projecting branch of a great prickly bush which was waving and dancing in the wind.

We were drawing our first deep breath after our peril when I heard a great shout above me, and starting round, I saw between me and the sky the figure of a man standing with a gun upon the very verge of the precipice which formed the line of coast. He directly fired his piece, and set up a loud outcry to his comrades, three or four of whom directly joined him, and fired a volley at us which did no damage. So we jumped up on the taffrail rail, and waving our hats, gave them a loud cheer, and told them that if they wanted their schooner, they might swim after us, and then we

would consider the matter. They made violent gestures, but the sea-breeze blowing so freshly, carried back their voices, and we knew not what they said. Carrying on as we best could with our ill-set sails, until we had made a good half mile offing, we luffed the schooner up into the wind, and with some trouble, got the canvass properly extended; then pulling the helm hard down, we got the jib-sheet to windward, and so lay to, dancing and surging merrily upon the sea.

And now we shook hands again, and embraced each other cordially. Here we stood on the deck of a fine schooner—our own by lawful capture from our enemies—and we thought of the surprise we would give our comrades in the bay. But the first thing to be settled was the fate of our prisoners, and we determined very unanimously that they must be put on board one of the boats, and left to find their way to the shore, Nicky only stipulating that if the lady should take a fancy to him, she should be allowed to remain on board. With some laughing at this proposition, we opened the cabin door, and called to our captives to come on deck, which they did, pale and trembling, for they seemed to expect no less than instant death. Nicky would be gallant to the lady, and to that end made her profound salutes, and spoke some gibberish, which he said was very good Spanish, for an expression of his admiration of her

charms; but she never ceased crying out for "her husband—her husband," and begging, in the name of all the saints, to be put ashore. The boy, being more collected, managed to inform us—I, with my scanty knowledge of Spanish forming but a poor interpreter—that the schooner was called *Nostra Senora del Carmine*—that she had come to catch tortoise and to hunt wild cattle along the coast, it being the opinion of the citizens of Havannah, to which she belonged, that the late expedition had routed out all the privateersmen and hunters on the northern shore of Hispaniola. We then directed our attention to the man who had been acting as cook, and who, having partially recovered from his blow, was sitting up and looking very scared and foolish. However, his wits—if he had any—were still abroad, and we could not make him understand any of our questions; only when he was shown the boat with a couple of oars, and we pointed to the shore, and made as though we would push him over the side, he comprehended fast enough, and presently he and the boy got into the skiff belonging to the ship, and the lady, who had somewhat recovered her spirits, followed them, taking some clothing with her, and hiding her face as much as she could in a black veil. Although the sea was rough, they had a good boat and a favourable

breeze, and we did not stand on our way until we saw them fairly into the shelter of the cove. Then we shifted the helm, let go the weather jib-sheet, and so began to plough our way to the eastward against wind and sea.

CHAPTER X.

THEY RETURN WITH THE PRIZE TO THE MARMOUSETTES,
AND NICKY HAMSTEING SHORTLY RELATES HIS HISTORY.

THE wind blowing steady, the ship was easy to manage, so we speedily set to rummage our prize. Going into the hold, we found that she had little aboard save some campeachy-wood and some cocoa-nuts, and a couple of old brass guns, of about six pounds calibre, which seemed to have been put there for ballast. In the cabin was a good store of powder and lead for casting bullets, which was exceedingly valuable to us, and several long-barrelled muskets in good condition. The best part of the prize, however, was her store-room, as it contained a great quantity of rope, canvas, and other things appertaining to the use of a ship. We also found a tool chest and a medicine chest, both of which were very welcome

to us. In navigating the schooner, we, of course, divided ourselves into two watches—the larboard and the starboard watch, Nicky and I having the one, and Le Picard and the Indian the other. We also reefed our sails so as to have the ship snugger, and the better prepared for squalls should any happen. We made good progress that night when the land-breeze blew, and hoped next day, by evening, to observe the headlands of the Marmousettes. Catching sight, however, soon after sunrise, of a sail close in shore, and not wishing, in our weak condition, to be overhauled, we stood away directly to sea, so that, by noon, only the blue mountain ridges of Hispaniola were visible. In the afternoon we put about ship, and made again for the land. This long stretch caused us to lose much time, so that we had another night's navigation before us ere we could work up to our bay. Nicky and I had the midwatch. It was a glorious night. We were running five or six knots, with the cool land-breeze sighing in our sails. The heaven was one vault of stars, and, lying on deck wrapped up in folds of old canvas, while Nicky held the tiller beside me, I fixed my gaze upon the Southern Cross, that beautiful cluster of stars which shines only in the tropics, and which, appearing in the solemn and thoughtful night, always caused me to feel that I was in a strange part of the world, even more than the

curious animals, and plants, and men, which one sees daily and ordinarily about one, when abroad. And yet, beautiful as the constellation was, methought it had less charms than the Plough, and the bright belt of Orion circling about the polar star, which I used to gaze upon in the long night-watches at home. As I thought of these, I thought of the old fisher-boat tossing upon the wild bay of St. Andrew's, or lying stilly at her grapnel in the mouth of the Balwearie burn, while my mother and I sat with our palms mending nets upon the sand hill in the sun. I think I would have been a great day-dreamer had I not led such a stirring life as kept my muscles busier than my brain; but on these quiet clear nights, aboard ship, when all was still, save the steady murmur of the wind, and the monotonous plunge of the vessel, as she breasted the ever-rolling seas—in these nights there is a witchery upon me, and I love to let my fancy carry me away, and surround me with old faces and old times. So now, being in this mood, I dreamed and dreamed with my eyes open, persuading myself that I was on board the Jean Livingstone again, and that we were jogging along the rocky coast of Forfar, until I actually started up, and looking at the shore to windward, thought that I could discover in the shimmer of the moon the tall white rock we called the Lady of Arbroath.

"Nicky," says I, being in this mood, "do you ever think of home?"

"That do I," he responded, "and hug myself that I am not there."

"But is there no old place," quoth I—"no old face you would wish to look on again?"

"Not a bit of it," he replied, "I am too happy here. We have a good ship, we have staunch comrades, we have prospect of wresting plenty of doubloons and pieces of eight from those rascally Spaniards. We have Jamaica, with all its taverns, and its dice, and its wenches, to help us to spend them; and besides all these, why, we have at this moment a steady land-breeze, which is sending us along at five knots, and a glass of good brandy, after a good supper, to keep out the marsh fever. What more can any man want?"

"Perhaps," quoth I, "you were not happy at home?"

"You have hit it there," replied my comrade. "No. My father was a stout King's man—why he was so, I know not, for I am sure the king never did much for him. But poor dad got what brains he had knocked out at Naseby, and some time after, my mother married old Ephraim Crotch, as bitter a Puritan as ever wore cropped hair and ass's ears. Now I, being a youth of spirit, did in no ways take to my father-in-law—on the contrary. Well, I mocked his slang, and

mimicked his snuffle. Many a time did he lay his staff across these shoulders — augh! they ache even now! The old frump—I hate the thought of him!—often hath he turned me out of doors, to sleep in the fields. Then have I peeped in at the lattice, and seen old square-toes snug in the chimney ingle. ‘Ha!’ thought I, ‘my father’s bones would rattle in their grave, could he but look in, and see you in his old oaken chair, whelp of the Barebones breed!’ So you may believe that our house was a pretty place for bickering. I loved all that my stepfather hated. He said that music was devil’s screeching—ergo, I played the viol and the tabor till they were broken on my head. He denounced all diversion, swore that rope-dancing was a subtle device of the evil one, and that the bowling-alley was the highway to hell—ergo, did I frequent fairs and jovial meetings, where the bowls trundled, and wrestled many a fall, and grinned through many a horse collar. I promise thee, Will, I was not made for a Puritan, and so, at length, they having, by an ordinance of old Noll, hewed down our Maypole, I e’en laid a good thick splinter thereof across the back of my reverend stepfather, and marched from Cornwall for ever and a day.”

“To London, no doubt?” quoth I.

“Even so,” he said, “but there I found neither

gold nor silver in the streets, and I lived for some months a very unedifying vagabond-sort of life, knees and elbows being generally very bare, and stomach generally very hungry. At length, being hard driven, I e'en enlisted, though it went hard against my conscience, under Old Noll. Such drilling, such fighting, and such psalm-singing. The sergeant's rattan was never off our shoulders, except when he was exhorting us in the pulpit, or standing on a horseblock, calling the royalists sons of Agag. So, this going on for some time, and I trying in vain to become a saint, for which I had not sufficient bad qualities, I e'en took leave to desert; and because the land was too hot to hold me, I became a mariner and went to sea. But at sea, Will, I saw one great sight, I saw the King land on the beach of Dover, and having long observed, that seasons of rejoicing are seasons of hospitality, I treated my ship as I had done my regiment, and followed the royal train up to London. That was indeed a march. All the country flocked to the road to see the King come back to his own again. It was nothing but eating and drinking, and up caps, 'Huzza for King Charles, and to the devil with the Rump!' Well, on Blackheath, near London, was drawn up my own old regiment. 'Gad, the sun was on my side of the hedge now, for there stood our

sergeant as grim as Beelzebub in the sulks, and I having many pottles of wine in me, gave a tug to his grizzled moustache, and asked what he thought of me, for a son of Agag now. I warrant you, Old Ironside used his halberd with very little discretion by way of reply, and so I came away with a bloody cockscomb. But all was one for that. Wine was a great balm, and I applied it plenteously; being indeed in a very loyal state of drunkenness for certain days, I know not how many, until, having a little recovered, I found myself in the filthy hold of a ship with other ragamuffins; some sober and weeping, some drunk and singing, and some ill with the small-pox and jail fever, raving and dying. Then I presently understood that all this goodly company was bound on a voyage to the plantations in Barbadoes—we having, it seems, signed articles to that effect, in consideration of certain small sums of money, which they told us we had received, and spent in drink very jovially, and as became stout-hearted fellows. I made a bold attempt to escape by knocking down the sentry at the hatchway, but all I gained by the proceeding was a pair of very heavy irons, which were put on near the Tower, and which were not knocked off until we were three days' sail from Barbadoes. There I landed, and, being duly sold, was set to

labour with sundry other companions in misfortune amongst the sugar-canes. In a few months I was one of a very few survivors, but being very weak and sickly from two fevers which I had, I was not very sharply looked after, and so I managed, without much difficulty, to smuggle myself on board a small bark bound for Jamaica, where I joined the 'Brethren of the Coast,' and have lived a reasonably jolly life ever since."

This was Nicky's story, and an adventurous one it was. While I was thinking of it, he began again—

"No, no—no England for me, while there are Spaniards to fight, good ships to sail in, and stout fellows to drink with in these bright Indian seas." And therewith, having taken a good draught of brandy, he burst out singing :

"Take comfort, pretty Margery, and swab away your tears,
Your sweetheart, Tom, has sailed among the gallant Buccaneers,
So dry your eyes, my Margery, your Tom is true and bold,
And he'll come again to see you, lass, with glory and with gold,
For his comrades are the stoutest and the bravest in the land,
And there's ne'er a Don came out of Spain will meet them hand to hand.

So-ho ! for pike and sabre cut, and balls about your ears,
'Tis little he must care for these, would join the Buccaneers !

"The man who lies at home at ease, a craven heart has he,
While there's wild boars on the hills to hunt, and Spaniards
on the sea;
So look alive my stately Don, for spite your thundering
guns,
Your shining gold we'll make our own, and eke your pretty
nuns.
We'll spend the first, and love the last, and when we tire
ashore,
'Tis but another cruise my boys, and back we come with
more.
So-ho! for pike and sabre cut, and balls about your ears,
'Tis little he must care for these, would join the Bucca-
neers!"

"Silence, silence, Nicky!" said I, laughing;
"you will awaken the watch below."

"So be it," quoth he; "to listen to such a
song is better than sleep. 'Tis a rare good one,
and a rare fellow made it in Tortugas, one night
when we were melting the last pieces of eight, re-
maining after a cruise on shore. But you put me
out. Hear the last verse—

"What though to peace in Europe, the Dons and we incline,
The treaty seldom has much force—to the south'ard of the line.
Here's wassailing and fighting, the merriest of lives,
With staunch and jovial comrades, with sweethearts and
with wives.

We sweep the green savannahs, we storm the Spanish walls,
And we're kings upon the water, by the grace of cannon
balls.

Then ho! for pike and sabre cut, and bullets round your
ears,
'Tis little he must care for these, would head the Bucca-
neers!"

Next morning, after being becalmed as usual in the interval between the land breeze and the regular trade wind, we kept pretty close in with the coast, looking anxiously for our bay, and we even feared that we had overshot our mark ; but about noon the well-known rocks became visible, and presently thereafter we dashed up the Marmousettes, wondering what our comrades would take us for. There was no English flag aboard, but thinking that the folks ashore would recognise the cut of the boat sail which we carried along with us, we hoisted that to the mainmast head, and with this strange standard flying approached the beach. We could see no change in the bay, and hoped to find our friends all well. Presently, as we were rounding a wooded point, and just opening the huts, a musket was fired ashore among the trees, and we heard the loud, hoarse voice of Meinheer shouting that a strange ship was in the bay. At this moment, doubling the little cape I speak of, and furling up our sails as well as we could, we descried the whole of our party running about in great commotion upon the beach, shouting to each other, loading their pieces, and hammering their flints. Thereon, we all gave a great cheer together, and showed ourselves conspicuously above the bulwarks ; on which, we being immediately recognised, they answered our cheer with loud exclamations, and, running to the

canoe, came alongside just as our anchor fell three fathoms deep upon the white sand.

"What ship is this?" exclaimed Stout Jem, who was the first to leap upon deck.

"She was the schooner *Nostra Senora del Carmine*," I replied; "but now she is a bold privateer, and will, I hope, never bear a Spanish name again."

Then we related all the particulars of the schooner's capture, and informed our comrades what a clever sea-boat she was, and how we thought that, were she well manned, we could not have a more proper ship for our purpose. And then we moored the schooner carefully, and Stout Jem inspected her both below and aloft very minutely, being exceedingly well pleased at the quantity of stores which were on board, and also at the smart appearance and weatherly look of our prize. So all the company being in high spirits, we set to work at once to victual the schooner, having ample supplies of provisions at hand, and into her we of course transferred what clothes and property of the kind we had saved from the attack upon the first settlement; and having finished our task by nightfall, the whole party embarked, and we towed the schooner to the middle of the bay, where we anchored, and Stout Jem then proclaimed that he meant to hold a grand sailing council upon deck. This is a ceremony always

in use amongst the Buccaneers, and at these consultations they settle the articles of the voyage, and assign to every man what his share shall be of the total amount of booty which may be captured.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BUCCANEERS PRESENTLY SET SAIL IN THE SCHOONER FOR JAMAICA, WITH A RELATION OF THE EVENTS WHICH HAPPENED THERE.

BEHOLD us, then, seated in great conclave under an awning, which it was Stout Jem's first precaution to have spread, as, the berths in the schooner being close and stifling, we desired to sleep in the open air. In such a case, the stretching of an awning preserves a crew from the fall of the unwholesome dews, and from the rays of the moon, which, mild and beautiful as they are, yet, by some hidden power, swell and distort the features of such as sleep with their faces unprotected from the baneful light. A sea-box put upon deck served as a table, and we sat on chests and coils of rope round it. The night was beautiful and serene. The land-breeze just murmured aloft, the sleeping water of the bay was dotted

with the twinkling images of the stars, and all around the dusky hills flung their forest ridges high into the balmy air—wreaths of mist and vapour, like broad white ribbons, showing where the rich alluvial valleys and ravines clove the sweep of the wooded uplands.

Two or three lanterns stood upon the chest, glimmering on the pans and pipkins wherein we held our punch, and the fiery red sparks beneath every man's face gave note that we all loved to fortify our frames against night air by wholesome pipes and tobacco. So, presently, Stout Jem addressed us pretty nearly in this fashion :

“ Well, mates, we sit on the deck of our own craft, lawfully won from those misbegotten Spaniards, by four brave men of our own party. Now, as the capture was made before we are afloat, the vessel, by the laws of the coast, belongs to our comrades who took her, and of course they must be paid duly, when the prize money comes to be overhauled. Meantime, the question is, shall we straightway go to sea ? ”

On this we all shouted—“ Yes, yes ; a cruise, a cruise ! ”

“ Good,” continued Stout Jem, “ I say, with you, a cruise. That being settled there are other matters to consider. Here are no guns, either calivers, arquebusses, culverins, or falconets. To make booty of the rich Spanish galleons without

cannon, is like trying to eat a lump of bull-beef without teeth. The two brass guns below may do in their way. For these we have, however, no carriages; and besides, we want a piece of far heavier metal. Another matter is, that on board here we have neither a surgeon nor a carpenter, although both we and our ship are likely to meet with plenty of hard knocks; and furthermore, to make a cruise successful—and as the old Falconers were wont to say—to fly at game of the first head, we must have more men. Jack Spaniard does not always leave his ships defenceless, and his galleons have rows of teeth which bite sharply. My counsel therefore is, that we stand for Port Royal in Jamaica. On the way we may chance upon a something worth picking up, and once arrived there, we can fit out in good style, and take on board what men we please. Besides, there we can have a French commission, or Letter of Marque, the French being now at war with the Spanish. I know that the Dons have hung many of our brave comrades with their commissions about their necks, but still I approve of doing all things regularly and in order. Now, then, you have heard my advice—what do you say to it?”

We replied, with great acclamations, that he had spoken very justly; that we had all confidence in his counsels, and that we created him captain of

the expedition. After some further discussion, I was named quarter-master, I being a more experienced sailor than many older men; and to Stout Jem, or, as we now called him, Captain Jem, was given the charge of the larboard, and to me the charge of the starboard watch. This done, we re-christened the schooner—dashing a bottle of spirits upon her bows—and calling her the ‘Will-o’-the-Wisp.’ We lay quietly at anchor that night, and weighing before dawn, the last of the land-wind carried us clear of the bay, and when the sea-breeze struck us next morning, we up helm, veered away the sheets, and stood away along the coast bound for Jamaica.

How vast is the difference between beating to windward in a small vessel against a rough sea, and flying gaily on before wind and waves! Cape and headland, and bay and creek, appeared and disappeared, as the nimble Will-o’-the-Wisp went bounding on, kicked as it were by every foaming sea which rolled behind her. You may be sure that we kept a good look-out for the former owners of the schooner, as we ran just past the entrance to the cove, but no human form could we descry among the rocks and woods. Not very far to leeward, we however observed a boat, with a small clumsy sail, making her way along the coast; and, approaching

a little nearer, I soon guessed that she was the boat of the Spaniards which we had given up to them, and that they were probably risking the chances of a run to Cuba. To satisfy our curiosity, however, we kept slightly away and very soon overhauled the little craft. She had but four men in her, including he who seemed to have been the captain, and the woman. Their sail was a clumsy thing, made of hides and scraps of canvas, and useless for any other purpose than to drive before the wind. As we approached them, the captain got up and hailed us very vehemently in Spanish. The purport of his discourse, as I gathered it, being whether, after robbing him of his ship, we meant to run down and sink the boat. A movement of the tiller soon made him easy on that point, and he sat down doggedly, with his teeth clenched, scowling at us. The woman clung to him convulsively, and the three men lay stretched in the bottom of the boat, only showing their tangled hair and black eyes above the gunwale. Captain Jem, who as he was a brave man was a kind one, told me to ask whether they needed any food or water; which I did; but the Spaniard only waved his hand impatiently, muttered somewhat about "*Perros Inglesos*," English dogs; and one or two of the men clenched their fists at us over the side of the

boat. All this, however, we could well afford to take in good humour.

"Well," quoth Captain Jem, "if they are well victualled, so are we; and if they wont say aught to us, we have little that I know of to say to them. So, cast loose your brails, my sons, and let's be jogging."

The sails, which had been partially furled, were accordingly reset, and in half an hour the boat was a speck on the horizon to windward. We ran through the strait which separates Hispaniola from Tortugas, near enough to the latter coast to see that there were long stretches of flat rich land washed by the sea, and high mountains beyond. We also saw a great many sails of small boats and barks coasting along, and innumerable canoes fishing. That same night we passed the north-eastern part of Hispaniola, and, directing our course towards the south-east, sailed straight for Jamaica. In the afternoon of the next day we sighted at a great distance the longest outlying point of Hispaniola, and in twenty-four hours thereafter, descried Cape Morant, in Jamaica; and, coasting along the southern shore, which lies hereabouts, very rich and flat, with great peaks, called the Blue Mountains, in the distance, we descried at nightfall the glimmer of distant lights, which we knew to be those of Port Royal. Here is the principal harbour in the island—a very

commodious and safe one—formed by a deep indentation in the land, like a gulf, and sheltered by a long spit or bank of sand, called the Palisades, on which the surf beats vehemently, while within, the water is like a mill-pond. There is but one entrance, and that well fortified; and the town of Port Royal is built just beyond the inlet or passage from the sea. Although it was near midnight when we anchored outside, resolving not to enter until we had daylight to help our pilot; a canoe presently came alongside of us, manned by a couple of negroes, who were fishermen and pilots, and who offered us abundance of fish and fruit very cheap. These men managed their canoe like thorough seamen, and one of them we retained to take us in as soon as the sea breeze should blow next morning.

This fellow wore coarse canvas trousers, a striped shirt, and a great straw hat, and grinned and showed his white teeth, and rolled his eyes, and clattered in his gibberish fashion to all on board.

“Oh, me de best pilot in all Port Royal,” he would say; “take in a king’s ship, big enough to put dis schooner in him pocket, and never rub him keel. No, no, massa, Dick Canoe,” for so he called himself, “de best pilot in all de island, and berry much esteem and respect by all de merchants, officers, and gentlemen privateers.”

On asking him for news, he told us that many privateers were in the harbour, and that their crews, having had reasonably good luck in an expedition to the main, were spending their money in the usual fashion ashore—information which pleased us the more, as we would probably have our pick and choice of good men. So next day we ran in among very intricate sand-banks which lie at the mouth of the harbour, and presently saw the houses of Port Royal, with hundreds of artificers labouring to construct forts and bastions and such works around them, disposed so as to command the entrance to the harbour completely. Inside, in the smooth water, rode many brave merchant ships and certain smaller barks, which, I believe, had often brought destruction upon the Spanish towns of the main; but these last seemed empty, except a negro or two left in charge of them, all hands being carousing on shore. We dropped our anchor in a suitable place, and cast lots who should remain on board to take charge of the schooner, while the rest went into the town. The die fell upon Black Diamond, and the Mosquito men stayed on board voluntarily, intending, however, to put off in a canoe during the day to strike fish upon the sand-banks and the little islands near the Palisades. Captain Jem, Nicky, and myself went ashore in the pilot's canoe, meaning to make the necessary arrangements for the further pro-

secution of our voyage. We found Port Royal very bustling and busy; as I have said, the people were occupied in building great fortifications, under the direction of officers in the English uniform, some of the workmen being, as we heard, criminals, others negro slaves, and the rest free labourers, either white or black; on the beach, great crowds of negroes were rolling down casks to the water's edge, or along the wharfs, where the boats of the ships in the harbour were awaiting them; these labourers being generally naked except a pair of light drawers and a tattered shirt, and shouting, and chattering, and laughing to each other, while the white drivers, who walked amongst them with great broad-brimmed hats, very often interrupted their conversations with a smart crack of the whip, and a harsh order to labour on. Passing through these busy crowds, and amongst great heaps of goods, such as bales and casks just landed from England, and masses of shipping stores, over which grave merchants and supercargoes were busy with pen and ink, comparing invoices, bills of lading, and what not, and wrangling about qualities and freights, we emerged among the houses of the town, which were in general mean, and but of one story, built indeed commonly of wood, with shingle roofs, which rattled in the sea breeze, and often sheltered by orange trees covered at once with

fruit and bright flowers, and mangoes with their heavy foliage, and tamarinds, with branching feathery leaves, and long waving pods. The houses had great open casements, and covered galleries, called jalousies, with pillars, round which many gaudy creeping plants clung. Here there were great stores, with all manner of commodities; and there, vast taverns, from the open windows of which we could hear loud roaring songs in French and English, and a great clatter of glasses; and now and then, when the noise somewhat lulled, the rattle of dice. The streets, which were very narrow, dusty, and irregular, were crowded with groups of half-drunken seamen and their trulls, gangs of negroes carrying great baskets of fruit and vegetables on their heads down to the harbour, with planters upon horseback, who rode along scattering the crowd right and left, and bullock-carts, which creaked and rumbled by, laden with kegs of sugar or rum, and drawn by oxen, all slaving at the mouth and seeming half-dead with dust and heat. Through these crowded and smothering streets, Captain Jem, who was our leader, pushed along with the air of a man who knew his business and could do it. He was often stopped and accosted by his acquaintances, many of whom professed themselves surprised to see him, as they

heard that he had been murdered by the Spaniards in Hispaniola.

"What! Stout Jem, still in the land of the living?" said one man, a very tall personage, burnt almost black by the sun, wearing great moustaches, and having a hanger fixed to a broad leathern belt—"what! Stout Jem again! Why, my lad, we drank a rousing glass to thy memory no later than the night before last, at Nance Finlayson's on the quay. We heard that the Spaniards had sent thee from Hispaniola to a hotter place still."

"No, no, Captain Archemboe," quoth our commander; "they tried, but having failed, we mean to have our revenge."

"What! and you have left the wild bulls and are for the sea again? It doth thee honour, man. Hunters are but gentleman butchers after all. The sea, sir—the sea, with a tight ship, and tight lads for a crew, and reasonable good luck among the galleons—that, sir, is the field, and these be the chances for gentlemen! They tell me that Davis hath come in from the main after a very good cruise, so now I am bound shoreward to see my ancient friend, who, I warrant thee, will screw gold out of the Spaniards, though he squeeze them till it distil at each pore. I give you good day—I give you good day!"

And so, calling to an attendant negro, this for-

midable gentleman passed on. Captain Jem told us that his name was Crashaw, and that he had been a valiant buccaneer under Mansneldt, but was now retired from the sea, and very rich. He cultivated considerable plantations, and had shares in many privateers. Our object was, however, first to see a person of Captain Jem's acquaintance, who was an old man, a money-lender and usurer, and a sort of agent for many of the Buccaneers, as it was necessary that we should obtain certain stores upon credit before setting out upon our voyage, and this old man was in use to serve privateers in such matters. Accordingly, we presently came to a long, rambling sort of house, in which was a great open store, full of goods of all kinds, while vast masses of ship furniture and implements, such as stones, anchors, boats, and the like, lay under sheds around. There were many seafaring people viewing the property, and chaffering with the clerks and workmen who sold the goods. But Captain Jem passing through them into the store, amid the bows and congratulations of many there, we followed him through a small door and sundry passages into a distant room, within which we heard a rustling of paper, and presently Captain Jem, pushing open the door, we found ourselves in the company of an aged man, with long white hair, a thin face, and very bright grey eyes, who was seated at a desk,

he wearing a dirty, greasy doublet, all ink stains, and loose pantouffles, or breeches, much too big for him. Upon sight of Captain Jem, he got up hurriedly and shook him very cordially by the hand, saying, like the other, that he never thought to have seen him again, for that the Spaniards were reported to have made but short work of all the English and French hunters on the northern coast of Hispaniola. Upon this, Captain Jem told him how we had captured a very fine Spanish vessel, and designed to put to sea again directly. But that in the meantime he must furnish us with sufficient stores and ammunition, and so become a partner in the enterprise. The old man at first shook his head.

“Look ye,” said he, “little is done now-a-days, save by fleets. My good friend Captain Morgan, a very brave man, and wise in those things, ever recommends union. The Spaniards’ treasure-ships commonly sail in squadrons, and heavily armed; and their towns along the coast are very securely guarded, so that there is usually hard fighting before these be come at. However,” quoth he, “I have great confidence in you, Ezra Hoskins—or Stout Jem, as I hear they call you—and provided your crew be such as I approve of, why I will stand the risk of loss in the venture, being well assured that you and your men will do their best for me and for themselves.”

At this, Captain Jem re-assured the old gentleman very warmly, and then it was settled that he should come aboard the ship that evening, to see what might be wanting, and how many guns we could stow. After this, he ordered refreshments of spirits and tobacco, and while we were smoking, he called a young clerk, and writing a short letter, gave it him, with instructions that he was to carry it at once to the jailor of the town prison, who would thereupon bring Alonzo Peres before us. The old man, observing that we looked inquiringly at each other, told us that a vessel, in which he had no mean share, being cruising in the Gulf of Darien, had fallen in with and captured a Spanish Barco del Aviso, or packet-boat, which had, however, as usual, thrown her despatches overboard in a sealed leaden-case. But the captain of this barco proving, when made a prisoner, a cowardly fellow who would reveal all he knew of the movements of the richly laden ships belonging to his countrymen, the English had kept this man a prisoner on board, while they dismissed his comrades in a piragua, intending to get all the information they could out of him.

“Therefore,” quoth our old gentleman, who I found was called Pratt—“therefore, we will have him here, and examine him. The bark which took him has gone to the Pearl Islands on the Mosquito shore, and perhaps he can give some

information which may guide you on your cruise."

So presently, the Spaniard was brought in pinioned, and led by two men. He was a very big man, but with scowling and mean features; and, by his air and complexion, he seemed to have been lying weeping in the straw of his dungeon. On seeing us, he immediately began, in the Spanish language, to pray, in the name of all things holy, that we should dismiss him, and let him go back to the mainland to his daughter Paquitta, whom he loved very dearly, pitiously exclaiming that he was a poor man, who had been ruined,—still that he wished the English no harm, and would pray for them for ever, if they would only let him go.

But Pratt cut him short in his lamentings, and proceeded to ask in Spanish, which he spoke very fluently, a great number of questions, as to the trade between Carthage and Old Spain, and as to when certain richly-laden ships, the names whereof Pratt had at hand in a great register, would sail out of that port. To all this, the Spaniard replied very amply and humbly, and said, in particular, that a large ship, in which was embarked a considerable quantity of pieces of eight, and silver plate to a much greater amount, but he could not say exactly how much, would probably be ready for sea, and put out in about

two months time. This ship carried, he informed us, a private venture, and would not have convoy. Moreover, she was old and a very slow sailer, and that the merchant who freighted her was the more confident that she would escape, inasmuch as it was reported and believed in Carthagena, that all the Buccaneers were upon the point of joining their strength in Jamaica, and landing about Porto Bello, with the intention of crossing the Isthmus, and making a descent upon Panama and the shores of the South Sea. This account, the traitor confirmed with abundance of oaths, calling upon us to believe him the more, inasmuch as, quoth he, "I have now no reason to tell you a lie; I stand in your power, and if you hear more certain news, which is likely, and it contradict what I have said, why I am in your hands to work your will on!" And with that the pitiful-hearted creature began to sob and weep again. Truly, I had never seen so small a soul in so big, lusty, and goodly a body.

Having made his disclosures, Pratt told the Spaniard that he should no more go to prison, but live there in his house, and if all turned out to be true as he had stated, that he would have his liberty, and it might be a reward beside. So he being dismissed, we talked the thing over, and determined to propose to the crew a cruise on the Darien coast, and perhaps to look into the

Gulf of Venezuela. We then took leave of Mr. Pratt with many courtesies, and returned towards the beach. On our way hither, we heard a great tumult and clamour, and, turning down a narrow lane into the street from whence it proceeded, saw, what was to me a new and strange sight. In an open space, which partially commanded the sea, and backed by a great tavern with verandahs and galleries, was assembled a crowd of people, men and women, white, brown, and black, drinking, smoking, dicing, and swearing. There were tables and huge benches scattered about, and sitting on these in every attitude, or lying on the ground, not being able either to sit or stand, were the people of this strange company. In the centre of the carousing place, was a great cask with the head knocked out, and from it a half-drunken seaman, with a face of leering shyness, was drawing forth wine in a broken bucket, and pouring it into the glasses, mugs, and pipkins, held out to him on all sides. Most of the men were white seamen, and they sprawled over the tables and benches, with tobacco pipes in their mouths, and waved their glasses, and sang loud catches and songs, in which the shrill screaming voices of the women rose above their hoarse bawling. Most of these women seemed of the sort which frequent the streets in Wapping, and rob the seamen; others were half-bloods, being

mulattos; or mustafees—that is to say, three-parts Indian; or quadroons—that is to say, three-parts white. But they were all dressed in flaunting gauds, and the sparkle of jewellery flashed upon their brown skins, as they flung their arms about, and rattled dice, or swallowed liquor like the men. Every now and then a brawl would arise, and knives would straightway glitter in the air, and loud thick voices would shout out oaths and exclamations in English, and French, and Low Dutch. But the general feeling of the revellers being pacific, the combatants would be straightway torn asunder, and perhaps flung upon the ground, to the danger of their bones; after which, the orgies would proceed as before; the men would rush in staggering groups up to the cask, or would produce their dice again, or greasy packs of cards—a species of gambling we learned from the French—and set themselves to play, some with great gravity and in silence, others shouting and yelling as luck turned for or against them, and all of them tossing about handfuls of gold and silver, such as dollars and doubloons, as though the money had been dirt; until, perhaps, a party would break out into a loud roaring song, all curses of the Spaniards, which heating them to the highest pitch, they would start up, the women with them, hallooing and screaming like fiends, and capering and jumping, tossing over

benches and tables upon the ground, and at last drawing forth, and brandishing their hangers, and firing their pistols in the air!

In the very midst of this riotous assemblage, a man, not very sober, but not very drunk, got upon the top of an empty cask, he being supported at the legs by the same Crashaw we had met, and bawled out in a thundering voice that he was going to sell certain commissions to cruise against and capture Spanish vessels, and that those gentlemen privateers who designed shortly to go to sea again, would do well to hearken, and if possible purchase, as the commissions would be sold very cheap, and their product would be spent in wine, to be drunk out at that present sitting by all the honourable company. At this announcement there was a general uproar of approbation, and Captain Jem, plucking my sleeve, said, that here might be matter which concerned us, and, having whispered that the man on the cask was Captain Davis, of whom Crashaw had spoken, we made our way through the throng, who indeed received us very cordially, everywhere holding up full glasses of wine and brandy, and pressing us to drink. Meanwhile Davis recognised Captain Jem, and, jumping down from the cask, bade him welcome. Seats were immediately procured for us, by the summary process of flinging their former occupants on the ground, and we lit

pipes and jingled glasses, like the rest ; although I do not know a more disgusting thing than when a sober man comes into the company of many who are drunken, and has yet, in a certain degree, to conform to the humour of those about him. From Davis, Captain Jem at once procured such a commission as he thought we wanted. I did not see what mighty good the document could do us ; but it seems to have been a fancy of our commander's, and for the paper we agreed to pay a couple of doubloons, for which we gave an order upon Mr. Pratt, which was immediately sent into the tavern, and shortly re-appeared in the shape of an additional keg of wine, although that in the cask was not yet, by any means, consumed. But when the Buccaneers saw the fresh liquor, they flung their lighted tobacco-pipes into the old cask, and then, with drunken glee, drew forth great mugs and glassfuls, with which they besprinkled each other, and at last upset the cask, treading, trampling, and dancing in the spilt wine, until they had churned it into red mud.

You may be sure that we were anxious enough to get away from these mad revellers, who, after the foolish fashion of too many sailors, both abroad and at home, were spending, in a few hours or days of insane debauchery, the money which they had risked their lives for months to obtain. At first, they were not willing to let us

go, insisting that since we had paid for the additional keg of wine, we should bide the drinking of it out; but upon our telling them that we were busily engaged in fitting out a privateer, and that the Blue Peter would speedily be hoisted at the fore, they consented to let us depart—first drinking success to our cruise in great bumpers, with cheering and firing of pistols, and almost every man shouting out some advice, as to whither we ought to proceed. Here was one bawling out in favour of the Mosquito Coast; and there another screaming that most booty would be found to the eastward of the Gulf of Venezuela. At length, we got free, and devoted ourselves for some days to preparing the schooner, internally, for the accommodation of a larger crew than she had ever before carried.

There was no lack of hands, for Captain Jem was known as a commander, and as soon as we hoisted the Blue Peter, seamen came off in great numbers and applied to ship with us. Captain Jem personally examined all claimants, and when they passed his scrutiny successfully, it was for those who already formed the crew to receive or reject them. In this way, in a couple of days we were well manned by thirty-six stout seamen, including our original party. Except two Frenchmen and one Dutchman, all the new part of the crew was English. Our boatswain

was a short square-shouldered, powerful man, who had once commanded a ship, and was a good West-Indian pilot. His name was John Clink. We had also a good carpenter, and what was of almost as great importance, a surgeon, esteemed very skilful, a young Scotsman, like myself, bred in the University of Glasgow, and very eager in prosecuting researches into the natural history and productions of the teeming islands and continents of the West. The surgeon's name was Wood. Meantime, Old Pratt had come on board, and after inspecting the schooner, presently sent four guns, with a great quantity of ammunition, and near sixty stand of musketry, with boarding-pikes, cutlasses, and hangers in proportion. We also carried a great boat which took up almost all the space between the masts, and we slightly altered the rigging of the schooner, setting up square foretopsails and foresails, so as to make her handier going before the wind. Our victualling being now completed, and all things ready for sea, we had, as is usual among Buccaneers, a general meeting of the crew to determine and sign articles. A paper or indenture was drawn up by Mr. Pratt, and to it we all affixed our names, or our marks. First, the indenture stipulated that the terms upon which the voyage was to be undertaken, were 'no prey, no pay.' Then it was provided, that all the booty obtained, of whatsoever nature, should be

flung into one general stock, nobody whatsoever keeping anything back for himself, but acting fairly and honourably to his comrades; out of this common fund all were to be paid in due proportion, considering their station on board, or their share in the venture. First came the proprietors of the ship, who were three—being Le Picard, Nicky, and myself, for they did not count the Indian. A certain proportion was awarded to us, in the capacity which I have mentioned, and another proportion to Mr. Pratt, calculated by the value of the sea-stock, &c., wherewith he had supplied us. Then the salaries of the captain, the quarter-master, the boatswain, the carpenter, and the surgeon were fixed, and certain sums were determined upon, to be given in compensation for the different species of wounds which we might receive. These compensations were upon the following scale, and they applied alike to all the ship's company. The loss of a right arm, six hundred pieces of eight, or six slaves; of a left arm, five hundred pieces, or five slaves; for a right leg the same; for a left leg, four hundred pieces of eight, or four slaves; for an eye one hundred pieces of eight, or one slave; and for a finger the like sum. As for the proportion of pay, the captain had as much as five ordinary seamen, and the quartermaster, or master's mate, which was my station, that of two. The rest of the

crew shared equally, and two boys whom we had on board drew the pay of one able-bodied man. Furthermore, it was stipulated, that each mariner, without any distinction of rank, should be daily entitled to two full meals of the ship's stores, besides what game or fresh meat we might fall in with, and the indenture concluded by reciting that all those who signed it by name or mark, did thereby take a solemn oath, not to hide or conceal from their comrades the slightest article of value which they might become possessed of, but to fling all, without let or drawback, into the common fund. This document was committed to the care of Mr. Pratt, and a copy made by one of his clerks, which was deposited in the main cabin, and of free access to all. It was then proclaimed that next morning, on the setting in of the sea breeze, which, on the southern side of the island, is favourable for leaving the coast, we would weigh anchor and stand off upon our voyage — so all was bustle and hurry — the schooner being surrounded by fleets of canoes, selling vegetables, fruit, and such wares, to be added to the sea stock of all who were minded to purchase them.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE DEATH OF AN OLD FRIEND.

ABOUT sunset, Captain Jem came up to me, and inquired whether I had any final business to settle ashore, in which case he could spare me a couple of hours, but no more. I replied, that I had no reason for quitting the vessel, when all at once, the thought of my preserver on board the French felucca, Wright, flashed upon me. I remembered how he had told me, that he lived in Jamaica, at Port Royal in all probability, and I reproached myself for not having before thought of inquiring after him. So I proceeded on shore at once, and went straight to Mr. Pratt's, who I imagined would be likely to give me the information of which I stood in need. Nor was I disappointed. Mr. Pratt, indeed, knew no person of the name of Wright, but he had frequently seen the man to whom my description must apply, and whose real name was Blagrove. "He lives,"

said Mr. Pratt, "in great retirement, dwelling in a small hut on the outskirts of the town, and cultivating, with two or three negroes, such a small plantation, as suffices to supply him with the necessaries of life."

Mr. Pratt then, at my request, called a negro lad, and ordered him to be my guide to Blagrove's dwelling; adding, however, that the old Cromwellian lived in such solitude, and hated the faces of strangers so cordially, that he doubted whether I should be admitted. Determined, however, to make the experiment, I set off, the negro preceding me with a lantern. After clearing the town we had a rough and rugged walk, through trees and plantations, and deep Guinea grass, already drenched with dew. Fire-flies sparkled in every bush, and the hum of innumerable insects, and the harsh croaking of frogs in the swamps and ditches, made a melancholy music. At length we descried a distant light gleaming amid trees; at the sight of it, the negro stopped, and pointing, said, "Dat Massa Blagrove's house!" at the same time making as though he would return.

"Well," said I, "do you not intend to come on, and light me to the door?"

The negro suddenly fell upon his knees. "Oh, Massa, please not insist; let Juba go back, now. Massa Blagrove terrible man, Obeah man, no

like oder white buccra ; live all alone by himself, wid Fetish. Oh, most great heaps of Fetish."

Now, at this time I did not understand the negro at all. I knew not what he meant by Obeah or Fetish, but I afterwards found that the gloomy life and austere manners of the Old Republican, had caused the negroes to believe that he was a sorcerer, or being of supernatural powers, and that they dreaded above all things being obliged to enter his grounds after dark. Seeing Mr. Pratt's negro, however, in a state of visible terror, at the idea of proceeding further, but having no time to stay to investigate the cause, I took the lantern from his hand, and told him to remain where he was until I came back. This he promised to do, but I had hardly advanced two paces, when I heard him scampering away through the rustling grass as fast as his legs could carry him. I called after the fugitive, but he gave no reply, so after muttering a curse upon his cowardice, I consoled myself by the reflection that he would be likely to get a sound flogging from Mr. Pratt for returning without the lantern, and then slowly advanced towards the light, which yet glimmered through the trees. I was not long in ascertaining that it shone from the rude window of a wattled hut, over which the branches of a great tree waved and rustled in the land wind. Having found the door, I knocked repeatedly,

but received no reply, and as I stood listening, I thought I heard the sound of smothered moans. Thereupon I lifted the latch—the door was not otherwise secured—and entered. The cottage consisted of but one room, very rudely furnished. Hoes and spades, and such like implements, lay in the corners. There was a massive oaken table in the centre of the room, and at one end of it stood the candle, whose light I had seen from without. Hanging from the roof, close to the table, was a sort of rude curtain of canvas, which screened off a portion of the chamber, and from behind this curtain I heard the moaning come again; after hesitating for a moment I stepped forward, and removed the drapery. Upon a low bed, without any curtains, his head and chest supported by a bag, such as that in which seamen keep their clothes, lay Wright, or Blagrove—now, alas, a dying man. He was terribly wasted, as though by fever or ague; his grey eyes so sunken that they seemed to gleam from the bottom of dark holes, and his features were shrunk and distorted, for the fingers of Death were pressing them. The sick man took no notice of me, so that I could mark a large Bible in which he seemed to have been reading, and which had fallen from his pithless hand upon the bed.

“Mr. Wright,” I said. He replied not a word.

“John Blagrove,” I repeated.

He started, and said feebly, "I am he—who calls?"

"Leonard Lindsay," I replied, "the Scots mariner, whom you aided to escape from the ship of Montbars."

"Lindsay—Lindsay!" he muttered, "I know not that name." He paused, and then said loudly and clearly, "Death—my voice is for death. He hath most foully betrayed his great trust, and the blood of the saints crieth against him. By what law, sayest thou, shall we put him to death? Even by that which gave Jericho and its people to the sword of Joshua, the son of Nun."

Listening to this, I saw that the mind of the dying man was running upon the great action of his life, and forbore to disturb him. But presently the delirium fit seemed to pass away, and he stirred restlessly, and muttered that he was athirst. I looked round the cottage, and finding a pitcher of water and a mug, held the latter to his lips; when he had drunk he seemed revived, shut his eyes for a moment, and then, opening them, fixed his gaze upon me, and smiled faintly.

"I know you now," he said; "how came you here?"

Feeling that his time was but short, I hurriedly replied, that, having arrived at Jamaica from Hispaniola, I had heard that he resided here, and had lost no time in coming to see, and thank him.

"You will see the last of me, then," he murmured; "I told you I should rest in the wilderness, and I am fast going to that long home."

I asked him if he had not had proper medicines and help in his fever.

"No," he replied, "none; I did not wish to live. I left myself in the hands of God. He has called my soul, and I obey the summons as firmly as I can."

"But surely," quoth I, "you require help—attendance?"

"None," says he—"a man can die alone. When I felt the delirium coming on, yesterday, and knew that my hour was at hand, I called together my four slaves and gave them their liberty. They went singing and shouting away, and I remained here waiting for the last moment with contrition, and prayer, and praise."

After this he was silent for a long time. Then he said, "Once I was a judge at a great trial, now I go to be judged for my judgment. Then, I did that which I believed to be right and good. I am of the same mind still. Before an hour, I shall know whether my voice spoke justly or no."

A very dismal silence succeeded. Blagrove was sinking very fast. When I took his hand it was cold and wet, and his breath began to come in flutterings and gaspings. While I watched him,

the light, which burned in a rude iron candlestick, suddenly flickered and went out ; and, except for the glimmer of my lantern, we were in darkness. Indeed, it was very terrible. The great branches of the tree overhead groaned as they swayed with the night wind, and sometimes hit the roof with a loud rattle ; the dismal croak of the frog sounded incessantly ; and the goat-sucker whooped his loud hollow note from the forest. As I watched the dying, I suddenly heard the lattice of the window shake, and, turning round with a start, saw a hideous black face, crowned with a curly mass of grey hair, laid close against the coarse thick glass. My heart beat, and my blood curdled as I gazed. In a moment, however, the face was withdrawn, and I was vainly attempting to persuade myself that the vision I had seen was fancy, when, by the uncertain light of the lantern, I observed the latch of the door move. The cold sweat came out upon me again as the door opened, and a hideous apparition entered. It was that of a very aged negro woman. Her face had that peculiar blackness which marks those negroes actually born on the Guinea coast ; and it was, so to speak, a perfect mass of huge wrinkles and skinny folds, through which her white teeth appeared with a ghastly conspicuousness. The principal part of her dress was an old dingy blanket ; and round her neck was hung a cord,

upon which shreds of cloth, birds' feathers, pellets of clay and stones with holes in them—the shells of eggs, and fragments of broken bottles were strung. This uncouth being advanced slowly into the hut, holding up in both hands a sort of graven image, or idol, made of a block of wood roughly carved, and stuck over with such scraps of offal and filth as composed her own rude necklace. I was so absorbed in a sort of compassionate horror, that I had no power to prevent her approach, but rather shrank from her—the hag looked so fearful and witch-like. So she proceeded to the very side of the bed—Blagrove, meanwhile, having his eyes shut and his hands clasped, as though in secret prayer—and then suddenly dropping on her knees, she raised her hideous idol before the face of the dying, and said, in a harsh grating voice:

“Buccra dying—buccra pray to Obi.”

Coming to myself at these words, I dashed forwards, wrenched the idol from the hands of the idolatress, and flung the hag back towards the door. She turned upon me with the fury of a wild cat.

“What for you here?” she said; “he is Obeah man, me is Obeah woman. Obeah men and women pray to Obi. It is one great Fetish.”

For reply I walked to the door and, opening it, flung the idol forth into the night. When I turned

again, the hag was affixing a bunch of parrot feathers to the bed.

"I set Obi for him," she cried; "I set Obi for you. De Fetish hab kill him—de Fetish will kill you."

Blagrove at this started up in bed—"I am getting blind," he said, faintly; "what voice is that?"

"De voice of Mammy Koromantee — of de Obeah woman," said the hag; "de moder of Paul, your negro, dat you set free. Paul say you die; I bring Obi for you to pray to—Obi great."

"Lindsay, Leonard Lindsay," gasped Blagrove, "come close to me—quick!—I am choking. Keep her away, fling down the strange god—fling Dagon from the high places."

I now supported his head, and saw that the great change was at hand.

"Mary, Mary," he said, faintly; "I come, Mary, my wife."

There passed a spasm over his face, and then his head hung heavy and dead across my arm. Immediately, the negress raised her voice, tremulous with age, and began to chant a sort of song—perhaps it was a dirge, in her own tongue.

"Go," said I, interrupting her lament—"go to Mr. Pratt's, and tell them that Blagrove is dead; they will return with you, and I will give you money."

"You gib me money," said the negress, quickly; "oh, den I go to Massa Pratt's, and I find Obi when de daylight come."

With this the hag bustled out as speedily as her old limbs would bear her, and in less than an hour Mr. Pratt and some of his people arrived. I paid the old woman her guerdon, and was glad to be relieved from my melancholy post—Mr. Pratt assuring me that all needful attention would be bestowed upon the dead. As for the woman, he said that she was more than half crazed with age and infirmity; but that in coming to the hut he believed that, after her own fashion, she had meant kindly. She was reputed by the negroes to be an Obeah woman, or witch, and the scraps of feathers, rag and egg-shells wherewith she had adorned herself were the means by which she wrought her spells and incantations.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BUCCANEERS SAIL FOR THE SPANISH MAIN, AND
ARE CHASED BY A GREAT SHIP OF WAR.

IN an hour after these events, I was on board the "Will o' the Wisp," greatly to the relief of Captain Jem, who feared, from my long stay, that some evil had befallen me; and with the first puff of sea-breeze in the morning, we were gliding past the point of the Pallisades out into the open ocean, on my first Buccaneering voyage. As the sun rose into a cloudless sky, the merry trade-wind freshened until it tore up the tops of the long swells into ridges of rolling foam, and caused the schooner to careen gaily over, so that the water buzzed, and gushed, and gurgled in the lee-scupper holes. Then my spirits, which all night long had been heavy and depressed, rose with every mile of sea which rolled between us and the

land, and I felt as elated and merry, bound upon a wild and venturesome expedition to an unhealthy and little known coast, as when the "Golden Grove" raised her anchor from the sands of Leith, and I expected in due time to see the hills of Italy and Greece.

We had a fierce and wild-looking crew, wearing in their dress the fashions of many lands; some were clad in jackets cut out of rich brocades and stuffs captured from the Spaniards. Others had doublets of hide. All wore moustachioes and beards, and carried great broad-bladed knives stuck into girdles of leather, or neatly twisted yarn. The experience of a few days showed us that we were manned by active and skilful seamen, one or two who turned out inferior in this respect being set to duties fitted for them, such as cooking, serving out the provisions from the casks, and helping the carpenter or sail-maker. Moreover, the men seemed tractable as well as handy fellows, and were on very good terms with each other, and quite delighted with the captain and the ship. To this there was but one exception—a sailor from London, called Bell. This man was sullen, sulky, and lazy, and Captain Jem having found him skulking from work, upon one occasion, when the wind blew very fresh, and the whole crew were on deck taking in sail, gave him so strong a hint with the flat of his cutlass,

that for some time, at least, there was no repetition of the offence.

On the third day, after losing sight of Jamaica, soon after sunrise, we descried a great sail to windward. The weather was then almost calm, and the swell trifling. Still the appearance of the sky was, as we thought, threatening. The sun had risen of a fiery red, and huge fleecy banks of vapour brooded over the ocean. The sail must have been for some time in sight ere we had distinguished it from the wreaths of white morning mist which here and there floated over the water; but having made it out, we knew that so great a spread of canvas must arise from a stately ship. Now, if she were an Englishman, a French, or a Dutchman, we had nothing to say to her, whereas if she were a Spaniard, she must be either an exceeding rich merchantman, in which case it was our business to speak her as fast as possible, or she was a man-of-war, in which case, we could hardly pack too much canvas upon the schooner to get her out of such a dangerous neighbourhood. However, the ship had the weather-gauge of us; she would bring down the sea-breeze with her, and all we could do was to lie idly upon the swell, watching her motions. For myself, I climbed to the schooner's main-topmast, with the best perspective glass we had on board; and I had not been long there before I could plainly perceive that our big neigh-

bour had felt the power of the sea-breeze, for she rose fast, spreading her great sheets of canvas out, like wings, and coming directly down upon us.

Captain Jem then hailed me eagerly from the deck, asking whether she looked like a merchant ship or a frigate. At first, I could give little satisfaction to his questions, as the stranger was coming directly towards us ; but presently, whether from bad steering or not, I am unaware, she gave a sheer to starboard, and lifting that moment upon a swell, I saw that she carried a great broadside of heavy guns, with a very high poop, rising I am sure forty feet above the water, and all encrusted, as it were, with galleries and carved windows, after the fashion in which the Spaniards build their men-of-war. Upon this intelligence, we prepared for immediate flight. We were to leeward, and so had nothing for it but to run before the wind. As yet, however, only those little puffs or airs called by sailors cat's-paws, the precursors of the coming wind, were stealing over the great shiny backs of the smooth lazy swells, whereas the Spanish frigate, for such we doubted her not to be, was in the midst of roughened water, and rolling two great ridges of white foam, from beneath her bows. How we cursed the chance which condemned us to lie idle on the ocean, when a formidable enemy was swooping down upon us, with a wind which made his heaviest canvas surge, and

his stout masts bend and creak. Meantime, however, we prepared to set studding-sails, and indeed hoisted them to be ready for the first of the coming breeze, at the same time, by the help of a sweep or great oar swinging round the head of the schooner in the direction which circumstances compelled us to take. This manœuvre was instantly observed on board the great ship, for she straightway fired a cannon, and hauled up the gorgeous ensign of Spain to her main-top-mast head, where it streamed forth in all its red and yellow glory. The next moment a bright spout of flame flashed from the Spaniard's bows, and the ball came skipping along the sea, making its last plunge not a quarter of a mile from us. But almost at the same moment our sails flapped and surged, then steadily swelling out, the schooner began to slip through the water. Seeing this, the Spaniards fired again and again; but without effect. Meantime, we were hard at work, setting every stitch of canvas we could get to draw, and presently we had quite enough of wind for the safety of our spars, the breeze driving before it that heavy pelting shower, which often falls soon after sunrise, and which sailors call the *Pride of the Morning*. The "*Will-o'-the-Wisp*" was now careering along at her full speed, rolling heavily before the great following surges, which would often rise in white foam, hissing and glancing round her

stern, and then melting, as it were, from beneath her, would sweep on, while the schooner plunged heavily down into the trough, her sails flapping like thunder in the lull, and then tearing and struggling, as though they would drag the masts out of the keel as the vessel was hove high again on the crest of the next following wave. Still the large ship was gaining upon us fast. A schooner is a species of vessel unfitted to scud before a brisk gale, like a square rigged ship, although in beating up to windward, we would most likely have the advantage. However, we spread every inch of canvas we could stretch out, and Captain Jem and myself both stood by the tiller. In an hour from the commencement of the chase, the Spaniard was not a mile astern of us; and truly, if the great ship had been a friend, she would have been a gay and a gallant sight—with her brave tall masts, and great sheets of canvas, which rolled from side to side, like a tower which totters in an earthquake, and her vast bows, all carved and encrusted with ornaments and devices, which would now plunge deeply into the brine, and then rise with the sea water pouring and flashing down, amid the sculptures and images of saints and long moulded and fretted ledges and serpentine projections of carved wood, which extended in gracious undulations on either side of the cut-water. But we had little mind to admire the

cunning work of the Spanish artificers, although, unhappily, every moment we saw it plainer and plainer. Our men began to look pale and troubled, and spoke in whispers to each other, and some of them lay sullenly down upon the deck. Meanwhile, Captain Jem and I consulted together in a low voice, and presently hit upon a plan which would give us, at all events, a last chance.

"Nicky Hamstring," said Captain Jem, "show the Don a sight of the flag which Sir Francis Drake carried against the great Armada."

At this bold speech, the men seemed to pluck up a little.

"What, boys!" quoth brave Jem; "you do not mean to stretch out your throats to the Spaniard's whittles?"

"Where is the use of preaching?" cries one of the men. "If we don't strike and heave-to, he will give us the stem, run his ship crash over us, and send us to the bottom before we can say a prayer."

Captain Jem pulled out a great pistol and cocked it.

"That was George Bell's voice," he shouted. "Hark ye, you snivelling cur, say but another syllable of striking or heaving-to, and I'll send you to hell with the word upon your lips. Comrades," continued the captain, raising his voice,

"is it fit that brave men and staunch should listen to a hen-hearted skulk, like the man who spoke?"

"No, no!" cried the whole of the crew—"no striking; let the Dons do their worst." And at that moment the ensign of St. George, fluttering up to the main-topmast head, we greeted it with a cheer, the echo of which came back from the broad sails of the Spaniard.

"Now, men," said Captain Jem, "be steady and sharp, and in ten minutes we shall have the big ship's weather-guage!"

Several moments passed in perfect silence, broken only by the roar of the sea around us, and the great plunges of the Spanish ship as she came careering and wallowing over the waves. We looked back, and saw her bows clustered with men, and standing upon the bowsprit, with his arm round a stay, we could discern the figure of an officer, with a very brave uniform, and holding a trumpet in his hand. Presently, this officer passed his trumpet to a man who stood by him, and who at once hailed in good English. We all heard his words, for they echoed loudly between the sails of the two ships.

"Surrender," he said, "or we will run the frigate over you."

"Stand by your sheets, men," said Captain Jem, softly; "and never fear for all I do, that we

are going to run our necks into Spanish hemp this cruise."

"Do you surrender?" hailed the Spaniard once more.

There was now not a hundred feet between the man-of-war's jib and our taffrail rail. It was fearful to see the great ship, like a moving steeple, rushing down upon us, and, despite of myself, I felt my teeth grinding against each other. I looked back once more, there was the mighty prow, clustered with men, frowning above us, and ploughing the sea into a great furrow of foam. That ship could crush our schooner, as a rock would smash a pipkin.

Yet no muscle quivered in Captain Jem's face. All at once he sung out, sharp and quick :

"Nicky, strike the flag."

The Spanish man-of-war rose upon a great sea, heaving her bows out of the water almost to her keel. The next moment, she would be crushing down bodily upon our deck. Just then the red-cross ensign disappeared from the mast-head, and Captain Jem, turning round, took off his hat. The officer on the bowsprit of the great ship immediately shouted, and as he spoke the vast bows gave a sudden sweep to the port or larboard side, almost shaving our taffrail, as they grazed past.

"Now, then!" roared Captain Jem, ramming

down the tiller hard a port. "Sheets, boys, mind your sheets—in with them—in with the larboard sheets. Hurrah, boys, hurrah!—show the Don that he must shut his claws quick, or we will slip through his fingers."

The words had not been spoken when the Will-o'-the-Wisp flew round like a top, in the opposite direction to that of the Spaniard, plunging down into one tremendous sea, taking tons upon tons of the glancing green water over her weather bow, and then lying over to the wind, until the washing seas rose up to the very centre of her deck. Of course the studding sail-booms snapped like pipe-stems, and the sails they supported burst away and floated down to leeward. But for this we cared very little.

"If the spars stand it we're safe," shouted the Captain to me.

I looked aloft, the schooner was almost on her broadside, the sea pouring over and over us in great curling volumes of blinding spray, flashing up high into the rigging, and drenching the surging, tearing canvas. This lasted but for a moment. There was a lull, the schooner righted in the water, plunged heavily at one or two seas, and then, although carrying a fearful press of sail, shot gaily away to windward. We looked astern. The Spaniard had been utterly discomfited by our manœuvre. After diverging from

her course just enough, as she thought, to save us from being run down, she had been obliged to keep before the wind, being afraid, with all her sail, to try the desperate experiment of luffing up, and was now a good mile to leeward, her crew busily employed in getting in all her light canvas, evidently with the intent of following up the chase.

“Now, boys!” called out the captain—“we have not shaken off the Don yet. He has had a taste of our quality, but he will be after us again. So while he is amusing himself to leeward yonder, let us get in a reef or so, the schooner will make better way through the water than when she is dragged down by too great a show of canvas.”

So presently the “Will-o’-the-Wisp” was under suitable sail, working hard to windward. Captain Jem was right in saying that the Spaniard meant not to give up his prey after one baffled swoop, and in a brief space he was close hauled upon the same tack with ourselves, careening down to the wind, until we sometimes expected to see him turn over bodily. It was lucky for us that, heeling over so much, he could not bring his guns to bear upon the schooner. Once or twice he fired a cannon, but the ball must have passed far above us. Our own pieces were too small for us to return the compliment, across a mile of sea, with any chance of hard hitting; besides, it was

our cue to trust rather to our legs than our teeth, and to mind our canvas rather than our guns.

All that long and anxious day did the Spaniard stick to our skirts. Had the breeze been lighter, we would have left him hand over hand, but the strong wind, and great tumbling seas, often bore us bodily to leeward, while the Spaniard burst through and through them with mighty plunges. Such a wind and sea, I repeat, could not but be of great advantage to the bigger and heavier ship. Thus it came to pass that when the sun touched the western waves, the Spaniard still held his position about a mile to leeward of the schooner. We had run more than one hundred miles since we hauled our wind, and still, for all we could see, we had neither lost nor gained an inch.

The night came on, but the wind still howled unabatedly over the far-spreading ridges of angry water. There was no moon, and great patches of dusky clouds went scudding by between the ocean and the stars.

"Now, my mates," quoth Captain Jem—"we shall find out whether Jack Spaniard's eyes mark well in the dark. Let all lights be extinguished in the ship, except the binnacle lantern."

This order was speedily obeyed, and soon afterwards the binnacle lamp was carefully screened, and at the same instant we lit a bright lantern,

and placed it conspicuously on our lee quarter. By this manœuvre it is evident that the Spaniard, if he saw aught, saw but one light, as though we carried no more. After this we tacked several times, shifting the lantern so as to allow our pursuer a good view of it, and make him believe that we were showing the light in bravado. By this time it was nine o'clock, and the wind was sensibly abating. We could see naught of the Spaniard, although many a pair of eyes were strained until they ached and throbbed with vain efforts to make out the secret of his whereabouts. About ten o'clock, we were upon the starboard tack, the schooner then laying a course which would have brought her back to Jamaica. A good sized cask was then prepared, by eight twelve-pound balls being cast into it as it stood on one end on deck. Then a sort of pole or spar, made out of an oar, was fitted into the cask, being stepped as it were amongst the cannon balls, and coming up through the opposite head of the cask, like a mast through the deck of a ship. This apparatus being well secured by stout ropes, was hove overboard, and slackening the lines, we saw that it floated perfectly upright. The machine was then hauled in again; the lantern, which I have already mentioned, was made fast to the top of the pole, and then the cask and all were carefully lifted over the bulwark, and cast

adrift upon the sea ; while, at the same moment, the tiller was put down, the schooner tilted gaily round and filled upon the other tack, and in five minutes we were half a mile away from the decoy beacon, which glimmered with an uncertain light, as it rose rocking upon the ridges of the seas. In silence and in darkness we kept our new course. Happily this was the gloomiest period of the night. Lowering banks of cloud lay heavily upon the eastern horizon, and the stars only glimmered occasionally through the scud. The schooner was kept a little from the wind, so as to make her sail her very best, and went careering, as though she bore a light heart, across the waves. We saw or heard nothing of our enemy, and by midnight we trusted that many a league of ocean rolled between our gay schooner and the great Spanish man-of-war.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STRANGE ADVENTURE OF THE UNKNOWN SHOALS
AND THE DWARF PILOT.

THAT evening it chanced that I had the mid-watch, and so when the dead of the night came, I took charge of the deck, and Captain Jem, and all who were not upon duty, went below. The weather was moderate, with a steady breeze broad upon our larboard beam, as we steered almost due south. I walked the deck for nearly three hours without having occasion to give an order to one of the watch. I was weary and exhausted, for the excitement of the chase had now gone off, and as for the seamen around me, they were stretched out dozing here and there upon the deck, and as we had a clear sea, and the wind held very steady, I was loth to rouse the poor fellows up. There was an old grey-headed sailor, whom we called Bristol Tom, at

the helm, and I sometimes listened to him as he crooned over ancient sea ballads, which had been sung by the sailors of Sir Francis Drake, and sometimes conversed with him upon the clever style in which we had shaken off the Spaniard. So the night waned slowly away. Every ten minutes or so I would go forward and cast a long look over the dull sea, stretching away before us like a heaving sheet of lead, save where here and there it was broken by a dullish white streak, where a wave rose higher than common, curled, and broke. At length, it wanted but half an hour to the time of my relief, and I sat down upon the weather bulwark with my arm round the stay, and began, according to my frequent custom, to build very gorgeous castles in the air. I thought of the happy day when, having made prize-money sufficient in these far-off seas, I would return to Scotland, and hear again the music which of all others was sweetest to the ear of my memory—the voices of my kindred, and the whimpling and gurgling of the Balwearie burn, as it trickled down the broomy knowes into the clear pools, where, with a running noose made of horsehair, attached to the end of a switch, I used to mark and catch the speckled pars. During my meditations, it struck me once or twice that the motion of the sea was changing; that the flow of the waves was not so uniform, and that they jerked

the schooner sharply as though she were ploughing a cross sea. Thinking, however, that Bristol Tom might be nodding over the tiller, I called to him to look sharp and steer fine, to which he promptly replied, "Ay, ay, sir!" and my spirit fled away again to the bonny shores of Fife. All at once, a low, dull roaring sound, very different from the sharp plunges of the schooner, and the seething, hissing noise of the seas, as they burst in beds of foam from beneath her bows, came floating on the night wind.

"Bristol Tom," I cried, sharply, "did you hear nothing like the roar of surf?"

"Lord love ye, sir," quoth the steersman, "there be no surf but where there be land near the top of the sea, and hereabouts five hundred fathom of line would reach no bottom."

"It must have been the wind eddying in the sail above me," I thought, but I kept my ears cocked pretty sharply.

Presently, I heard the sound again; there could be no mistake about it. There was the hollow boom of great seas breaking over banks of sand. I started up, and swung myself on the ledge of the bulwarks.

Not a quarter of a mile on our weather bow I could see a great bed of tumbling spray, which gleamed with a pale lustre in the dark.

"Breakers on the weather bow!" I shouted.

"Up, men, up! Keep her away, Tom, keep her away. Call all hands!—stand by sheets and brails—see all clear with the anchor."

In a moment the deck of the schooner was alive with startled men. I leaped forward and flung myself on the bowsprit.

"Breakers right a-head!" I screamed. "Up with the helm—hard up."

"Breakers on the lee bow!" sung out two or three voices at once.

We were embayed. The white water tumbled and roared all around us; I thought all was over, when right a-head I saw a space of dark sea. This might be our salvation.

"Hold your luff!" I shouted—"hold your luff! but keep her well in hand. So—steady."

"Steady!" replied Bristol Tom, and the schooner shot through a narrow channel—so narrow that the drifting foam of a great surge upon our weather bow flew over us in a salt shower. By this time the whole crew had tumbled out of their hammocks, and rushed upon deck half awake, and calling out to know what was the matter?

"Down with your helm—hard down," I cried again. The schooner swept up into the wind, and a great mass of foam seemed as it were to glide from beneath her bows.

"Breakers a-head!" sung out Nicky Ham-

string's voice as the direction of the ship was altered.

"Keep her away again," cried Captain Jem and myself together. The bows of the manageable little vessel receded fast from the wind, when she sunk in the trough of the tumbling swell, with a jerk and a jar which appeared to shake her very ribs.

"She has struck!" cried half the crew at once. But the next sea hove the ship buoyantly aloft; the wind came down with a heavy puff; she bent over before its influence, and for near five minutes rushed madly on amid the broken water which flashed and glanced upon either side of us; now, by a sudden twitch of the rudder, and a rapid jibbing of the sails, avoiding a reef, or spit of sand which lay directly across her course—anon, running along a belt of white water, until, mayhap, a sudden bend of the reef caused us to whirl the schooner right into the wind's eye again, and try to beat slowly up the tortuous channels, expecting every moment to be flung with a crash upon a ledge of coral rocks. All this time the men were working to clear the anchor, and just as the schooner was hove into the wind to weather the corner of a long shallow point of breakers, our moorings were let go, our sails sharply brailed up, and we had soon the satisfaction of finding that we rode easily to our anchor in about eight

fathom water, with a great labyrinth of sand-banks and low ledges of rock around.

All this appeared to us like a dream; ten minutes before we had been ploughing along the open ocean, not dreaming that there lay land within three hundred miles of us, now we were in the midst of an immense and unknown shoal, and a flaw of wind, or a shift in the set of the currents which must traverse its intricate channels, might fling us on a bank of sand or rock, on which we would leave the bones of ship and men.

Of course, our first business was to make our moorings as secure as possible. The Mosquito men, who have keen eyes, both by night and day, pointed out a dark lump upon our starboard bow, which we soon made out to be a low lying rock, and accordingly manning our light boat, we speedily carried out a warp, which we made shift to secure round a jagged projection of the reef, all clustered over with oysters and sea-weed.

Meantime, Captain Jem, with Bristol Tom, and myself, and sundry of the oldest mariners, retired into the great cabin to examine the maps and charts. We certainly did not know the exact position of the schooner, for in the hurry of yesterday's chase, no observation had been taken, but this we knew, that no shoal or island, indeed no soundings at all, were laid down in our charts, near which we could possibly be.

“No, comrades,” quoth Captain Jem, “here be rocks and banks, shoals and sands, which no mariner hath up to this time reported; although, mayhap, many a brave seaman hath found his long home amongst them.”

We looked long and earnestly to the east, before the blessed light came out upon the ocean. At length the dawn grew pale in the sky, then a red, warm glow brightened above the waves; the thin night-mists rolled away; the sea-birds came shrieking and clanging from their nests and holes, and we, truly, saw a lonely and desolate sight. All around the schooner, for miles and miles, was a pale greenish sea, laced, as it were, with bars and streaks of surf, which spread around like open net-work, and dotted here and there with great smooth banks of bright sand, and low, long reefs like jagged walls, rising now and then into a higher point of precipitous rock which showed, perhaps, some eight or ten feet above the level of the surf. The blue sea formed the framing of this dismal picture. As for the Spaniard he was nowhere to be seen, and, sooth to say, we thought or cared little about him. In regard to our own position, it was a miracle how we had by chance attained it; when I mounted the rigging and saw the great chaos of banks and spits of sand, and white belts of tumbling surf, through which we had reeled and staggered, as it

were, blindfolded, without in the least knowing our course or the direction of the channels, I felt as if a miracle had been accomplished in our favour. Having got safely in, however, the question was now how to get safely out again, and so having called a council upon the deck, it was determined that the schooner should be made as snug as possible at her moorings, while the shallop, which was our smallest boat, went out to survey the shoal, and if possible hit upon a safe passage to the open sea.

After breakfast, this plan was put into execution, and the charge of the boat was entrusted to me. The day was fine, the sea-breeze cooled the air. We put into the shallop some beef, biscuit, and a beaker of water, and rowed off, in very tolerable spirits. Our first intent was to trace the route by which the schooner had arrived at her present anchorage; but the attempt soon bewildered us; one man was confident that we had passed to windward of this bank, while another maintained that we had run under its lee. Here was a reef which our bowman remembered to have observed perfectly well, while he who pulled at the stroke oar was equally confident that the schooner had never passed within a mile of it. We therefore gave up the idea of taking the ship out as we brought her in, and set to work to discover another passage into blue water.

But sure such a hopeless range of shoals, banks, reefs, and dangerous points of rock, never bewildered poor mariners ; sometimes we thought that we had hit upon a channel, but just as we were upon the point of finding our way clearly into the open ocean, a few specks of white water only seen when the sea fell into a trough at that place, would stretch across the route, and reveal the fact, that a ledge of pointed and pinnacled reef barred the way. Then the currents and sets of the tide puzzled us greatly, washing up one channel, and down another, and boiling round the rocks in such a puzzling whirl of eddies and counter-eddies, that our boat was nigh stove more than once upon the sharp coral reefs. At length, after pulling the best part of the day, and landing upon many of the rocky plots, we made our way, with weary muscles and aching hearts, to the schooner, to report our ill success. We found that they had moored the vessel very snugly—that in case of accidents they had got the launch into the water, and that she lay in a snug little sandy cove, well sheltered from the swell, and, at half ebb, locked up, as it were, in a clear pool, like a shallow caldron.

The afternoon passed away very dully. Captain Jem sent the small boat out again, with a fresh crew, to look for turtle and sea-birds ; and it was determined that, next day, both the boats should

start upon an exploring expedition. The turtling-party soon returned with half-a-dozen fine turtles, and a great quantity of oysters; they had shot several ducks, but the greater quantity of birds they saw were noddies and sea-gulls, which they did not care to disturb.

About an hour before sunset, the men were lounging under the awning which we had set, fore and aft, some of them fishing in the clear water beneath us, when, on a sudden, there was a great cry of astonishment raised; and, looking up from the chart which I was studying, I saw a strange little man, so small, he might almost be called a dwarf, deliberately climbing over the taffrail. A dozen of our seamen rushed to lay hold of him, but he waved his hand, as though there was no necessity for violence, and jumped lightly down on deck.

“Where is the captain of this ship?” quoth he, in a strange shrill, cracked voice, and speaking English with a slight foreign accent. At this moment, Captain Jem came out of the main cabin and stared heartily, as indeed we all did, to see so unexpected and strange-looking a visitor. The creature—who was so queer and dwarfish a man, that, as I gazed upon him, I thought of old-world stories of Brownies and uncanny men of the moors—could not have been above four feet high. He had very broad shoulders, and such long mus-

cular arms, that they looked like fore legs of an ape. His face was big and broad, but not by any means ugly. He had light blue twinkling eyes and long fair hair, and a beard of a flaxen colour. The little man's dress was as strange as himself. He wore a broad hat, made of great ribbons of strong green sea-weed, very neatly plaited and wrought. He had a linen shirt, not of the cleanest, with a cloth cloak hanging round his loins, and bound with a broad belt of similar sea-weed to that which formed his hat, while on his legs, which were very short and thick, he wore a pair of coarse canvas drawers. His great brown splay feet were bare. When I say that this strange-looking apparition had a sort of necklace of coral, mixed with small pieces of gold and silver money hung round his neck; that his ears were weighed down with big silver rings; and that in his hand he carried a paddle, with a broad blade at each end, I have fully described to the reader the stranger who now advanced towards Captain Jem, pulling off his hat, and making a very polite bow. Not to be behindhand in good breeding, Stout Jem was nothing loth to return the salaam; after which, he asked the little man how the devil he had come on board.

"Look over the side, and you will see," quoth the dwarf. We all rushed to the bulwark, and there sure enough was a light canoe most beau-

tifully constructed, floating, as it appeared, on the very top of the water.

"Well, sir," quoth Captain Jem, "you seem a countryman of the most of us here, and you are very welcome. I can't help, however, thinking that you must have dropped from the moon. Mayhap you are the man in it."

The dwarf waved his hand very impatiently, as who should say, a truce with your idle jeers, and then quoth he very solemnly—"I am a pilot."

At this we all listened greedily enough.

"Well," says Captain Jem, "I can't say that we are not in want of one. But whereabouts may we be? Is there land nigh; and what do you call these rocks and sands?"

"There is no land that I know of nigher than New Providence," answered the dwarf, "and it lies a good hundred leagues to the westward and southward; and as for these rocks and sands, I cannot tell you their name, because they have got none."

"Then what ships come hither that you act as pilot for?" asked I.

"None at all," replied the little man, very briskly. "There is nothing to take ships hither, unless it be a few turtle, and these they can get in far less dangerous places."

At this we all stared at each other, and the men murmured that the dwarf was mad; and Bristol

Tom whispered that mayhap the creature had been marooned—that is, deserted—upon these rocks, and that he had lost his reason. After a short pause, however, the dwarf-pilot resumed his discourse.

“There never was a ship,” quoth he, “which came to these shoals but stayed there. There be plenty of room for a navy to lie on these sands and reefs, and then the first gale of wind that comes, smashes them faster than e’er a ship breaker in Limehouse.”

Captain Jem now began to lose patience, so he cried very wrathfully.

“If you talk more riddles to us, little man, God smite me ! but I will run you up to the yard-arm by the breech of your galli-gaskins, and so dip you into the brine, as men serve a mangy monkey !”

“Nay,” answered the dwarf, “I came on board to help you out of a scrape. You are discourteous, so get you to sea as you best can.”

“Well, well !” replied Captain Jem, “I was in the wrong ; but tell us frankly, man, what you are, and how you come to live amongst these accursed shoals ?”

“What I will do for you is this,” quoth the dwarf—“and I will do neither more nor less ; I will pilot your ship out to sea, and I will ask

nothing for it, but that you make me rid of you without loss of time."

"Why," quoth I, "you must be very fond of solitude to propose anything of the sort; and if you obstinately refuse to tell us what you are, or what you do here, how can we trust the ship and all our lives to your management?"

"You will have me on board," said the dwarf, "and I give you free leave to hang me up by the neck, not by the breech, if I as much as scrape a barnacle from the bottom of the schooner."

This proposition certainly looked reasonable.

"What will you do, when we get to sea?" asked Bristol Tom.

"What is that to you, old man?" quoth the dwarf; "go your ways, and leave me to go mine. I warrant I should have had more wit than to come blundering in here against my will."

"So you landed here on purpose?" says I.

"Whether I did or no," says the dwarf, "is nothing to you. Do you want a pilot, or do you not?"

Here, Captain Jem whispered to me that there might be more in this scene than met the eye, and that we should do well to secure the strange pilot who crowed so smugly. I assenting, the captain tipped the wink to half a dozen of the crew, who thereupon advanced towards the little man. But

he was sharper than we, for, observing what we intended, he made but two jumps, one upon the bulwark, and the other into the canoe below, the bottom of which I thought would be driven out by his weight; but not a bit of it—the little bark-built skiff gave a great surge, and then floated tranquilly a couple of fathoms from the side.

“Call you that seamen’s hospitality?” says the little man, grinning.

Captain Jem flew into a great rage. “Get your muskets, men,” he cried, but directly after, controlling himself, he directed us to give chase in the shallop, and bring back the pilot by force. Anticipating this order, I leaped into the boat, and, calling out for four young men, who were the best rowers and the most muscular and long winded fellows in the schooner; they jumped into the shallop with great glee, just as the dwarf, thinking he might as well have a start, dipped his paddle into the water and glided away. We were soon in chase, straining at the oars with right good will, and sending the shallop dancing at a great rate through the sea. Meantime our ship-mates on board the schooner mounted into the rigging that they might observe the race the better, and encouraged us with abundance of cheers and exhortations not to spare our muscles. We brought the boat gradually to its full speed, the canoe being then only a dozen or so fathoms

a-head. The dwarf was kneeling in the bottom of his craft, striking the water alternately on either side with the broad double blades of his paddle. Of course, he had his back towards us, but he went, as the Spaniards phrase it, "with his beard upon his shoulder," that is to say, constantly looking back, with a provoking grin upon his face. We soon found that if we caught the gentleman at all, it would not be until after a hot chase and a long one. But we gave a shout, and buckled to our work in good earnest. Meantime, the dwarf seemed to keep a-head almost without an effort—his light vessel skimming the very surface, while our heavier shallop was driving the sea into tiny ridges of foam, and leaving a wake of dancing agitated water. So, encouraging my men to pull long and strong, and steady strokes, we flew at a great rate through the intricacies of the shoal, speedily leaving the schooner far behind. It must have been a brave sight for a spectator to see—the light canoe, with its strange rower, spinning along, followed through all its windings and doublings by the shallop, impelled by cracking oars and straining muscles. Now and then, we would cross bays and creeks only partially sheltered from the swing of the sea, the canoe jumping, as it were, over the broken and sweltering waves, like a cork upon the parchment of a beaten drum, while the shallop would plunge, and jerk,

and thrash, amid the cross surges, taking them on board over the larboard and starboard gunwales at once. Still, I think we would have caught the dwarf, nervous as was his arm, and swift as was his boat, had it not been for the rapidity with which he could wheel her round and round, following the crooked channels, and threading the narrow and intricate passages of the shoal, while he managed all the time to keep the canoe at great speed. Of course our boat was not so handy. Our utmost endeavours would not always suffice to keep her clear of a spit of sand, or to alter her course in time to avail ourselves of a short cut into which the canoe would suddenly diverge. At length, my men began to show symptoms of distress; they panted at their toil, and, looking over their shoulders, began to murmur that there was no use in chasing the devil. All this while, the pilot had never ceased his impudent grin, and he seemed to be as fresh as when he had started from the side of the schooner. At length, we found ourselves in a pretty long open passage, with impassable barriers of reefs on either hand. The canoe was not more than a few fathoms a-head, for as we had flagged in our efforts, so had the dwarf relaxed in his. I thought that now was the time for a grand push, and shouting to the men that the game was in our hands, the brave fellows made a great rally—the ashen staves of

the oars cracked, the water buzzed and foamed, and in a moment the boats were not more than a few feet apart.

"Huzza, we have him now!" I shouted.

The men pulled like devils, the dwarf worked hard with his paddle; but nothing could keep before us in such a chase—foot by foot, we overhauled the canoe.

"Three strokes more, comrades, and he is ours." The men shouted, but the breath had hardly left their lips when—crack!—the bows of the shallop went smash upon a submerged spit of sand. The men were flung higgledy-piggledy, head over heels, sprawling into the bottom of the boat, while a couple of oars snapped like pistol shots. We had run upon a bar which crossed the passage, some six inches under water. The canoe, thanks to her light draught, had floated over it unhurt, and was now lying a few yards ahead—the abominable little dwarf grinning more furiously than ever.

"If we had a musket in the boat, you should laugh on the wrong side of your mouth," I shouted, gathering myself up and wiping my nose, which was bleeding famously. One of our men caught up a broken shaft of oar and hurled it at the canoe. The little man, who was as quick as light in his movements, parried the missile with the broad blade of his paddle, and called out—

“Ho! ho! pretty fellows to think of taking a ship out to sea without a pilot, when they can’t row a boat without running their noses against a post.”

The answer to this was a simultaneous salute from all the fragments of the broken oars, one of which, despite his adroitness, gave the little man a very tolerable thwack across the shoulders, upon which, not choosing to risk the consequences of another broadside, the dwarf called out—

“Good night; you had better pull to the schooner if you don’t want to sleep among the noddies and the boobies. Ho! ho!—good night.”

He then coolly paddled off, whistling. To have attempted to follow him would be sheer nonsense. We had our wings, as it were, clipped, and if we could not catch the canoe with four fresh men and four oars, there was little chance of overhauling him with four wearied men and two oars, so we addressed ourselves to get back to the schooner. The chase had lasted nearly an hour, and upon looking around we saw the masts of the “Will o’ the Wisp” at a distance which somewhat startled us. There was a flag flying at her main topmast head which we supposed was a signal of recall. We therefore began to retrace our course, manning the remaining oars double.

“I hope we may make the schooner, Will

Thistle," said Edward Lanscriffe, one of the boat's crew.

"So do I," said Paul Williamson, who tugged at the same oar with him; "it would be ill sleeping among desert rocks and sands, and them haunted, too."

"Haunted?" said I, "what do you mean? Haunted by whom?"

"By whom but the dwarf who paddled that canoe," answered the bowman, a sailor from Penzance.

"Why," quoth I, "do you think he is anything but a man like ourselves—only, perhaps, for the matter of that, a trifle shorter?"

All the men shook their heads gloomily, and one of them replied—

"No, no; it is no mortal that lives alone amongst these reefs, and refused the help of Christian men to carry him away from the middle of the sea."

"That is over true," quoth Paul Williamson, "and greatly do I fear that his coming boded no good to ship or crew. He ought not to have been allowed on board."

I tried to laugh at all this, but somehow I was startled and put out of spirits myself, not that I much heeded the fancies of the superstitious sailors, but the whole thing seemed to me so wild, and strange, and uncommon, that I mused and

mused hardly knowing what to think of it. Meantime, we were making the best of our way to the ship; of course our progress was slow, for we had to fish out a channel amid the shoals, and the tide being then low, the task was the more difficult. The accursed dwarf seemed to have led us into the most puzzling nook of all the reefs. We rowed and poled, and sometimes waded, dragging the boat along slippery ledges of rock, or smooth banks of fine white sand; but the schooner was still separated from us by a good couple of miles of rock, and sand, and sea, when the sun went down, and in less than half an hour we were groping in the darkness. The ship then fired a gun, and hoisted a light to one of the mast-heads as a signal. The twinkle of this light was, however, so faint, that had we not observed the lantern run up, we might well have taken it for a star, and therefore I kept my eyes steadily fixed upon the tiny spark, intending not to let it get out of sight. Directing the men, therefore, how to row, and continually bumping against points of rock and sand, we jogged on until, just as we rounded a long belt of reef, along which we had been running, the rush of a current of the young flood tide, which had just began to set in, sheered the shallop's bows violently round, bore us some yards away out of our course, and then tossing us into a sort of boiling cauldron, or

rather slight whirlpool, we were swung round and round until our heads were giddy, and every idea of our proper course gone. Pulling at last clear of this vortex, we tried to discover the signal light from the schooner, but in vain. The sky was now gemmed with stars down to the very horizon, and we knew not where to look for the guiding ray. It was then that I recollected how easily I might have set the position of the schooner by the constellations, but I had not thought of doing so, and now it was too late. The men began to look startled, and one of them said, in a low voice—

“I told you so ; no schooner for us to night.”

“Why do they not continue firing guns?” I muttered, impatiently. “Come, boys, let us give them a cheer.”

The night was calm, and I thought our voices might be heard on board the ship, so standing up, and putting our hands trumpet fashion to our mouths, we gave a long shrill halloo, and then listened intently. For a moment we heard nothing but the surging of the currents as the tide came washing along the channels of the reef, and the low sound of the surf outside. But then was heard distinctly the answering halloo. We shouted again, and shoved off in the direction of the voice, making very good way, for we had struck a tolerably open channel, along which the

tide was setting fast. Presently we heard the hail again much closer.

"Come, come," quoth I, "Paul Williamson, you will swing in your hammock to-night, for all that is come and gone."

"Boat ahoy!" said the voice a third time. "Sheer to port, and keep along that belt of surf on your starboard beam. Have you caught the dwarf?"

"No, confound him!" I shouted; "and we thought we should never have got to the schooner again. Why did you not keep firing?"

To this no answer was given, and Edward Lansciffe asked, in a low tone, which of our comrades it was who had hailed. This was a puzzler. We none of us knew the voice.

"Will-o'-the-Wisp, ahoy!" I shouted. "Halloo!" was the reply. "Why the devil don't you come aboard? Have you fallen asleep over your oars?"

"We can't see," we replied, standing up, and peering into the darkness. "Show a light, man—show a light!"

Immediately a lantern gleamed a-head of us. We pulled towards it. It shone from a dark object. I was in the act of telling the men to lay on their oars, when grit, grit, grit! the boat's keel scrunched upon the sand, and at the same time the lantern was extinguished.

"Ho! ho! Do you want a pilot? I think

you do, indeed," exclaimed the shrill, cracked voice we knew so well.

"The dwarf, by God!" ejaculated Paul Williamson. "I told you so. It is a demon, and we are bewitched."

I was in a great rage. "You skulking vagabond," I shouted out, "wait till daylight tomorrow, and we'll see whether an ounce of lead won't catch that canoe of yours, quick as it is."

To this there was no answer made, although we sat listening for near ten minutes. What was to be done? We hardly knew; but anything was better than lying idly where we were. The night breeze now struck cold and chill; the men had been overheated at their oars, and their teeth began to chatter. There was a very cordial response of "Amen," therefore, as I said, "I wish we had put a bottle of brandy into the boat." For half an hour or so we pulled at random, the men whispering and muttering to each other, when I saw a faint flash in the distance, and presently heard the report of a gun. "There goes the schooner, at length," I cried. The boat's head was promptly put into the proper direction, and we recommenced our weary pull with something like energy. We must have been near the outward edge of the shoals, for the surf thundered loud, and great broken swells often came rolling

past us in a multitude of uneven undulations. All at once the confounded voice of the dwarf hailed us.

"You are going the wrong way, my brave fellows. If you expect to reach the schooner on that course, you must pull the boat round the world, and carry her over Asia."

"Never mind the spiteful creature," I said, in a low tone; "he is but attempting to mislead us. It is his turn to-night; it will be ours to-morrow, when the sun rises."

Ten minutes more elapsed, then another musket was discharged, almost due ahead. "See," I exclaimed, in great triumph; "we are keeping the exact course; we shall be on board in a jiffy."

Paul Williamson shook his head. "The schooner," quoth he, "is anchored near the centre of the shoals, and you hear how heavy and how near the surf is beating."

I was somewhat troubled at this, I confess, but I saw nothing for it but to pull on. So we did, until having coasted for some time along a succession of rocks, on the opposite side of which the sea was running heavily, we suddenly shot out from beyond their shelter, and immediately the boat was hove up upon the crest of so high and long a swell, that we all exclaimed

at once, that we were out in the open sea. Just then, the pernicious dwarf hailed again, his voice now seeming to come from astern.

"You are better pilots than I reckoned," shouted the spiteful atomy, "only that when you would keep at sea you come ashore; and when you would hug the land you start off right into the ocean."

This time, at all events, he was clearly not deceiving us, so we promptly pulled the boat about, and were soon in the comparatively smooth water of the reef. One thing we now knew pretty well—the dwarf was armed, for it must have been he who fired the muskets, and, not doubting but that his optics were far more accustomed to the darkness than ours, we thought it extremely probable that he might amuse himself by plumping a shot or two into the boat. This was not a comfortable idea to cherish, so I hailed at random—

"Pilot! pilot—ahoy!" no answer. We repeated the summons a dozen of times, but heard no sound save the heavy beat of the surf and the wild cry of sea-birds.

"Why, the scoundrel has gone home to bed," quoth I; "and, to tell you the truth comrades, I think we may give up playing at blind man's buff for the night, and wait peaceably until we see the schooner in the morning."

This counsel was followed. We presently

found a sandy cove, in which we lay very snugly, and then, after setting a watch, dropped off to sleep, weary, hungry, thirsty, and vexed.

The day dawned, and we speedily discovered the schooner, about as far off as she was when we lost sight of her after sundown, the evening before. A pull of an hour brought us alongside, upon which there was a great outcry to know whether we had caught the pilot, and why we had not returned betimes.

"Why," quoth I, "we could not see you in the dark."

"There was a light all night at the main topmast head," says Captain Jem.

"Yes, but we lost sight of it once, and then we could not tell your lantern from a star. Why did you not fire?"

"We were clearing away the bow gun," answered Captain Jem, "when we heard you fire a musket."

"We fire! that was the dwarf. We had no musket."

"By the Lord," says Captain Jem, "I think we are all bewitched among these cursed reefs, which no one ever saw or heard of before."

CHAPTER XV.

AT LENGTH THEY CATCH THE DWARF PILOT, AND HEAR
STRANGE THINGS TOUCHING A TREASURE.

PREPARATIONS were now again made in order to discover a way out. My comrades would have me turn in and go to sleep, but I was too much excited to hear of it; and, accordingly, after breakfast I was in the shallop again, with four fresh men, including Nicky Hamstring and Bristol Tom. We carried with us fragments of light wood and great stones for sinkers, to buoy a passage for the schooner. There was no need of lead or line, for we could see to the bottom of the crystal water, even where it was many fathoms deep. We were thus engaged great part of the day, and being now working with something like method and regularity, we were making sensible progress in discovering a channel, when, just as I was setting one of our buoys, Nicky Hamstring

grasped my arm, and whispered with a sort of gasp, "There—look there !"

I followed his eye, and started up with delight. A long bank of sand, with ridges of coral, along which we had been skirting for some time, terminated in one of the largest and highest rocks we had seen. Indeed, when the tide was out, it seemed rather a rocky islet than a rock ; but what directed our attention to it was a deep cleft, into which the sea ran, and in which, as in a cistern of water, floated the bark canoe of the dwarf pilot. The shallop was close alongside the sand-bank when we made this discovery, and Nicky and I leaped out of her into the shallow water like a couple of madmen, and screaming to our comrades to row for the little creek, we both scampered along the dry hard sand towards the rock.

"You secure the canoe," I called to Nicky ; "the owner is not far from the nest ;" so, while Nicky went clambering along the steep shelves to the cove, I climbed up the ledges of the rock, slipping down now and then into cracks and hollows, which peeled my shins famously, but very soon arriving at the summit, from which I caught sight of the dwarf running with great speed round the base of the rock, and immediately gave chase, shouting out to our friend to surrender at discretion. But he took no notice, making as straight as he could for the cove, whence, doubt-

less, he expected to get clear off in his canoe. I seeing this, thought it unnecessary to risk my neck in order to intercept him, and so clambered leisurely down the rock, laughing aloud, and calling to the dwarf that I had told him that our turn would come with daylight. Meantime, the little man went skipping over the rocks like a goat, never making a false step, until suddenly he came in sight of the cove, within which the shallop by this time lay alongside the canoe. Then he set up a shrill cry of surprise, which my comrades answered with a cheer, and, stopping short, appeared to pause for a moment, after which he made straight for a projecting shoulder of the rock, round which he speedily disappeared.

"Never mind," quoth I; "take care of the canoe, and we shall soon find him." So saying, I called upon Nicky and Bristol Tom to land, which they did, making their way to the projection, round which the dwarf had run, while I, following a steep cleft or split in the rock, which ran from near the top of it, down to a white sandy beach on the opposite side from the cove, descended rapidly. All at once, about half way down, my eye caught the flutter of canvas, and immediately I discerned something like a tent, very snugly pitched in a nook of rock, about a couple of fathoms above high water-mark, with a sort of fence of barrels and boxes round it.

"Ho, ho!" quoth I. "Here is the hermitage, at last!"

"Stop!" says the shrill voice I had so often heard, "stop there—as you value your life!"

And thereon I descried the dwarf, with a long barrelled Spanish gun in his hand, which he was in the act of lifting to his shoulder.

"Stop!" quoth he again; and being unarmed, I had nothing for it, in prudence, but to obey.

"My friend," says I, "you may as well uncock that gun. Your canoe is taken, as you saw. My comrades are upon the rock. The schooner is not a mile off, and if you are fool enough to fire at me, hit or miss, I warn you that it will be the last time you will ever pull a trigger."

The little man paused a moment. "Let me alone, and I will let you alone," he said.

"No, no," quoth I. "You paid us the first visit, and we must show our good breeding by returning it."

The pilot considered for a brief space, made a passionate gesture with the air of a man deeply mortified, and then called out, at the same time grounding his musket—

"Come on. I will do you no harm."

So I descended and joined him, just as Nicky and Bristol Tom made their appearance on the beach below, having run round the islet. By this time we were close to the tent.

"Come in," says the dwarf; "I shall be more hospitable than you." The habitation consisted simply of a dry cleft in the rocks, over which a roof of canvas had been stretched, supported in the centre by a pole. For furniture there was a hammock, not slung, but laid upon the sandy floor, and a sea-chest, upon which lay a very complete set of astronomical instruments, with paper, pens, and ink, and a half-finished chart, which, appearing to be a plan of the shoals, I laid violent hands on at once. There was some common household stuff, such as knives, plates, and pots in a corner, and near them a good-sized water barrel.

"Well, gentlemen," says the dwarf, very politely, "behold you in my dwelling. What may be your pleasure?"

"Our pleasure," said I, "is, that you shift your dwelling for a brief space, and sling your hammock on board the schooner."

"I protest against being thus unlawfully carried away," says the little man.

"You are at perfect liberty to protest," said I; "but you must go on board all the same."

The pilot gave a curious sort of grin, but did not seem disposed to resist our power. Nicky Hamstring then went to the top of the rock, and hailed our comrades to bring the canoe and the shallop round, which presently they did. Mean-

time, I was considering within myself, whether by a careful overhaul of the little man's dwelling, I might not be able to light on some clue to the motive—and it could not be a common one—which seemed to bind him to these desolate shoals. Resolving to take my own time and my own way in the search, I directed my comrades to put the pilot into the shallop and row aboard of the schooner, telling Captain Jem that I would follow in the canoe, after a careful search of the tent. They started off accordingly; the dwarf, who appeared to be in tolerable good humour, notwithstanding his capture, taking my place in the stern-sheets, and managing the tiller.

As soon as they had disappeared, I commenced my inquisition. The chart of the shoals was very skilfully constructed, and neatly put upon paper, being very different, indeed, from the rude scrawls which seamen commonly trace, of coasts and islands. No indication, however, was to be observed of any harbour, or secure cove, the existence of which might make the reefs a place of refuge. I noticed, however, on the north-west corner of the shoals, a cross slightly traced with a pencil. Putting the chart in my pocket, I searched the hut thoroughly, raking up the sand which formed the floor; and also prying into the casks and boxes which surrounded the tent. These appeared to contain nothing save common coarse

provisions. The contents of the sea-chest were clothes such as sailors wear, with one suit of a Spanish cut and fashion, in a pocket of which I felt something hard. Examining more closely, I found the object to be a small and old book, in the Spanish language, imprinted at Granada, in the year 1507, and purporting to be the "Voyages and Perilous Journeyings of one Vincente y Tormes, who sailed on board the Caravel, called the Pinta, with the great Admiral Christopher Colon, or Columbus, for the Discovery of the New World." Looking over the contents of this volume, I found them to be accounts of divers voyages made between Spain and the West Indies, written in very bad and cramped Spanish, and containing but dry details of little interest.

I was about to lay the volume down, when I noticed that it came very easily open towards the latter portion, as though that part had been peculiarly studied, and, looking more closely, I saw that a leaf had been cut out. Towards the foot of the page preceding that which was missing, was a chapter with a title as follows—

HEREIN I DISCOURSE OF THE PERILOUS LOSS OF THE
GREAT TREASURE SHIP SANTA FE, AND OF MY
MIRACULOUS ESCAPE, BEING THE ONLY ONE OF THAT
SHIP'S COMPANY WHO, THROUGH THE SPECIAL GRACE
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, WAS PRESERVED OUT OF
A GREAT DANGER.

Then followed the words of the narrative in this wise:—

“Now all things being in readiness, there was a Great Mass held, with other needful ordinances and prayers to the Saints; and so, on the 14th of June, we loosed from the city of Porto Bello, intending to touch at St. Domingo, in the great Isle of Hispaniola, to receive the tribute from the Caciques, and so thence across the ocean to Spain. But, alas, it fell out otherwise!—for being but six days at sea, with contrary winds, which here do blow continually from the north-west point of the compass, we did unhappily ——”

This was the last line of the page; the following leaf being, as I have said, torn out. The narrative recommenced upon the succeeding page with these words:—

“Thus, thus was I—all praise to the Holy Saints, particularly to my patron St. Geneviève, and to the Virgin—rescued from my hopeless and miserable condition, and carried home to Spain, I being very heavy and desponding in that voyage, on account of the loss of all my ship-mates, so that I vowed never to tempt the seas again, but rather to live on crusts and water ashore.”

From the remaining chapters, which were few, it would seem that the author had kept to this resolution, for he narrated that he became a water-

carrier and a servant to a priest, called Pedro Vronez, to whom he dictated the book. The perusal of what I have set down above, the reader will possibly guess, gave rise to a startling train of ideas in my mind, and putting the adventures of Vincente y Tormes in my pocket, I jumped into the canoe, the Mosquito-men having taught me the management of such cockle-shells, and was presently alongside the schooner.

Captain Jem was leaning over the side, fishing with a hook and line.

"Well, what have you found?" quoth he, as if he did not think that my search could have availed much.

"Found!" I echoed, clambering on board. "I have found what may well make our fortunes."

At these words, our comrades came running from all sides, very eagerly.

"Where is the dwarf?" quoth I.

"Oh, in the great cabin," replied the Captain. "A sullen piece of goods, I warrant you. He refuses to speak a word."

"Have him out," answered I; "and we will try to make him find his tongue."

And so, presently, Master Pilot was hustled forth upon the deck.

"Will you tell us," quoth I, "why you choose to live alone amongst these grim rocks?"

The little man grinned, twisted his features,

and answered never a word. The crew looked on curiously.

"Once upon a time, there sailed a Spanish treasure-ship from Porto Bello."

The dwarf pricked up his ears, and all the blood went away from his face.

"In which ship," I continued, "there was a mariner named Vincente y Tormes. But the ship had not been six days at sea, going to Hispaniola to receive the tribute of the Caciques, when it was lost upon certain reefs, *with the treasure on board*, and Vincente y Tormes of all the crew, was saved and carried to Spain, where afterwards he became a water-carrier and servant to a priest, named ——".

"You need not trouble yourself to recite further," said the dwarf, with a shrug of the shoulders. "You guess my secret. I thought none of you had wit enough to pick the marrow out of that bone, but it was all my own fault. I came on board this schooner, and in doing so threw away, by one moment of folly, the fruits of years of labour and danger. Dolt that I was!—what could it matter to me, whether you succeeded in blundering out, as you blundered in, or stayed here until the first heavy blow smashed your ship to powder on these coral reefs? It would have been all the same to me."

Having made this speech with great bitterness

but in a perfectly composed fashion, the Dwarf sat down upon a coil of rope, and shrugged his shoulders almost as high as the crown of his head.

The crew were now all in a hub-bub, for they comprehended, more or less, that there was the wreck of an ancient galleon upon the reef, and they knew that silver and gold are metals which brine rusts not.

"I suppose," quoth the dwarf, "that you will give me a fair share of the booty when we get it."

This, they all proclaimed that they were very ready to do, and one or two of the more eager shook hands with the dwarf, who assumed a very sour smile.

"Now, then," quoth the Captain, when the tumult was a little abated, "tell us somewhat more about this, and rely upon it, we will deal justly by you. Who, and what are you?"

"Why," quoth the dwarf, "my story is of the shortest; my name is Paul Bedloe, and I was born beneath the Peel of Douglas, in the Isle of Man; my father owning a small craft, which plied to Liverpool—a village on the Lancaster coast—I was brought up a sailor, but I liked better to write and cipher than to handle ropes and furl sails; and having, also, a great liking for geography and astronomy, I became a very good

navigator, and going to London, settled at Limehouse, where I kept a school for teaching seamen the art of navigation. Growing somewhat tired of this business, however, I went several voyages to these seas with a captain who had been my scholar; and afterwards, returning to Europe, I wandered through many countries, taking great delight in Spain, where I found several interesting accounts left by the first discoverers of America of their voyages. One day, in the shop of a Jew in Cadiz, I discovered the book, which you, sir"—turning to me—"doubtless, found in my chest. One leaf of that work had a very particular interest for me, and from the time I first saw it, I have kept it carefully on my person."

With that the Manxman produced the missing page, from his bosom.

"By the help of this," continued he, "I found out how the treasure-ship, Santa Fè, had been stranded upon an exceeding great shoal, and how a storm soon coming on, she had sunk in mid-dling deep water, between two ledges of rock. The ship's company having deserted her in boats, these were speedily swallowed up in the storm, save that one in which Vincente y Tormes sailed, and which survived the tempest, although it was driven far to leeward. The wind then taking off, a calm followed, during which all the seamen in the boat, with only the exception of Vincent y Tormes, perished miserably

of hunger and thirst. He was himself nigh dead, when a caravel descried and picked him up ; ultimately conveying him to Spain, where he settled, and went no more to sea. You may judge," continued Paul Bedloe, "whether I have not given a fair account of the missing page;" and, handing the document to me, he continued as follows:—

"On reading what I have now stated to you, it occurred to me, that in all the maps and charts which I had seen, no mention had ever been made of any such shoals, as that upon which the 'Santa Fe' was wrecked, and I concluded that no ship had ever fallen in with them, save those, which, like the Porto Bello galleon, had never returned to tell the tale. Hence, I concluded, that it was very possible that some fragments of the wreck might yet remain undisturbed, containing boundless wealth. With much ado, and by spending nearly all which I possessed in bribes, I got access to the documents in the archives of the Minister of Marine of Spain, and there I found the loss of the 'Santa Fe' fully confirmed. She had sailed from Porto Bello, and had never been heard of again. This entry, mark you, was before the date of Vincente's publication, while he not having appeared to contemplate the possibility of recovering the foundered wealth, took no steps, and communicated with no one on the subject. After this, I care-

fully examined Vincente's narrative, and compared with it the records of many voyages from Porto Bello and Carthagena to Hispaniola and Porto Rico, so that, at length, I satisfied myself that the shoals in question must, if they existed at all, be within a certain circle of fifty miles in diameter. I next communicated with a brother of mine in Bristol, touching the matter, and informing him that I intended to proceed to the West Indies in search of the shoals, and the wreck of the 'Santa Fè,' conjured him, in case he heard from me again, to have a ship ready fitted out, to sail for the longitude and latitude which I would send him. I embarked at Cadiz, and landed in Porto Rico, which island I suspected of being almost right to windward of the shoals. Here I made acquaintance with a Welsh seaman, to whom I partly communicated my projects; and with the help of a negro, and two Indians, very faithful attached fellows, we constructed a great 'Piragua,' victualled her very well, and put off to sea. We cruised for a month with no success, and then were forced to run for the Samballas Islands, off Darien, for more provisions. Putting to sea again, after a three weeks' voyage, we hit upon the spot we sought for. The weather was then exceeding calm, and we could see the bottom in the very deepest parts of the reef, so that on the eighth day of our search, we actually descried the re-

mains of a great ship, wedged between two rocks, about five fathoms under water. Our Indians were brave divers, and speedily brought up pieces of carved wood, and two or three old fashioned swords, which satisfied me that we had hit upon the wreck of an ancient Spanish vessel; for when we scoured the blades, we could read on them the word 'Bilboa.' At length, after tearing a great deal of the wreck to pieces, the divers reported that they had come to many large chests, with great clamps of rusted iron; and one of these being wrenched open, a small ingot was seen lying just beneath the lid, which we soon found to be virgin silver. On this, I stopped further proceedings, and wrote a letter to my brother in cipher, such as we had agreed upon to use. This letter, my comrades in the 'Piragua' started away with, designing to make Jamaica, and send it home by an English ship; while I, having an ample amount of provisions, and having found great basins in the rocks, which the rain filled with fresh water, determined to remain, until the Piragua returned from Jamaica, to watch over my treasures, and to study the best means of recovering it. In case of accident to the Piragua, I had a canoe, with which, in moderate weather, I was not afraid of reaching the land. I had been here just two months and three days, when, on waking one morning, I saw your

schooner. Such, gentlemen, is my story from first to last."

You may be sure that there was great acclamations at these tidings of a ship load of riches falling, as it were, into our mouths; but Captain Jem, who appeared to have his doubts of Mr. Bedloe, ordered his person, his chest, and hammock to be very strictly searched. Everything found, however, confirmed the story. There were several books upon navigation, and an old diary in which were entered divers sums in dollars, reals, and marvedis, which appeared to have been expended upon the Spanish officials at the office of marine. Besides this, the draught of a letter, addressed to Master Richard Bedloe, near the church of St. Mary, Redcliffe, in Bristol, corroborated a great portion of the dwarf-pilot's story; so that, upon the whole, we began to believe him firmly. The ingot, he told us, the Welchman had taken to Jamaica to be assayed.

By the time that all these particulars had been ascertained, the day was almost at an end, and it was determined that, with the dawn next morning, both the boats should start to the wreck, provided with due tackle, and having the Indians, who are excellent divers, aboard. Paul Bedloe's hammock was swung in the great cabin, and a watch placed over him all night; but he appeared to sleep soundly, and to be but little affected by

the probable downfall of his golden hopes. Indeed, so much was I struck with this, and so composed was the dwarf in confessing the whole matter to us, part of which must at all events be true, that I came to the conclusion that, despite of all his pretended candour and frankness, the fellow intended to play us a slippery trick after all; so that, confiding my suspicions to my comrades, Mr. Bedloe was informed that, five minutes after he had given any symptom of treachery, he would be dangling from the sprit of the main-sail. To this intimation, the only answer he vouchsafed was the old shrug of the shoulders.

The night seemed long to many on board, and with the grey dawn the boats were manned, Bedloe sitting beside the captain in the launch, and directing the steersman. The dwarf told us that he would take the boats to the place where the wreck lay, which was near the open sea, by such a channel as the schooner could follow in. We therefore laid down buoys as we went along, it being determined that as soon as the launch reached the wreck, I should pull back in the shallop, and navigate the ship to the scene of action.

And now, behold us, with shout, and joke, and laugh, like men who are to be speedily and marvellously enriched, pulling gaily for the sunken El Dorado. The morning mist was rising slowly

from the ocean; the surf-ridges sparkled in the first glances of the hot sun-light; and the white and grey sea-birds wheeled and screamed joyously over head. The very rocks and sands bore a changed aspect in our eyes; instead of forlorn and dreary shelves of crag and shingle lying desolately in a far-off sea, we gazed upon them as the mystic beds of incalculable wealth. "The sea," we said, joyfully, "may not give up her dead, but she keeps a feebler clutch upon her gold. Courage, comrades, courage! we shall divide the ingots which were melted for the treasury of Old Castile."

"Why may there not be more than one single cast-away ship lying hereabouts?" quoth our surgeon. And we echoed, "Why indeed?"

At this juncture I noticed Paul Bedloe start and turn pale, just as he did when I told him his secret the day before. He recovered himself, however, directly, and it was not until after events had made me connect that start with the topic of conversation at the moment, that I realized all its significance and meaning.

A pull of less than an hour brought us to the spot where Bedloe declared that the treasure of the Santa Fè lay hid. The shoal, to the southward extremity, where we now anchored the boats, split into two long branches or arms,

having deep and sheltered water between them. It was on the weathermost or eastern of these banks, among spits of sand and jags of rock, that the remains of the ill-fated ship lay. Making fast a grapnel to a point of coral, we allowed the boats, under the pilot's direction, to drift five or six fathoms to leeward, until they floated in a rather deep channel, or hole, well sheltered by the coral reefs from the motion of the sea.

"Now then," quoth Bedloe, "look beneath you." Immediately, we were all bending over the gunwales of launch and shallop, and presently, shading off the light with one hand, we saw, some five fathoms down, wavering and quivering through the clear cold water, the mouldering form of a ship of size. There lay the once graceful hull, bulged and split by the rocks, the bows broken off altogether, the quarter and stern firmly jammed in a crevice of the reef, and so uninjured, that we could distinguish the quarter galleries and the outlines of the sculptured figures and medallions and carvings. The deck had been partially broken up, and two or three cannon lay half upon the bulwarks, half upon the rocks. All three masts had been broken off close by the board, and their stumps, like the rest of the wreck, were encrusted with masses of shell fish, and heaped, here and there, with wavy bunches

of slimy seaweed. Fish of many sizes and forms glided tranquilly between us and the foundered ship, and once or twice we saw a great flat ray rise up from the dark recesses of the hold, and glide like a plate of burnished copper along the deck.

"There, gentlemen," says Paul Bedloe, "you see I have dealt fairly by you. You look upon the Santa Fè, which, more than one hundred and sixty years ago, set sail from Porto Bello for Old Spain."

So, rising up, we gave a great shout, which, in a minute, we heard echoed by our comrades, whom we had left behind in the Will-o'-the-Wisp.

"Will Thistle," says the captain, "bring up the schooner directly, and for heaven's sake, take care of her bottom against the reefs; we may have a freight of price to carry home in it."

So presently, having returned to the Will-o'-the-Wisp, and satisfied the eager demands of those on board, we very soon cast off our moorings, and the trade wind blowing steadily, we set our forestay sail and mainsail and began to run down the channel towards the launch. The way being well buoyed, and all hands working very smartly and keeping a bright look out, there was no difficulty, and little danger, in making the run, and in less than an hour from the time I had left the launch, the schooner glided into the fork of

deep water between the two tails of the reef, and then forging near the edge of the weathermost bank, we furled our canvas, and the anchor plunged down, twelve fathoms to the bottom, sinking well into the soft sand, which here formed good holding ground.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THE DWARF TURNS TRAITOR, AND OF HIS FATE.

THE launch lay at about a cable's length distance, and Captain Jem hailed me to shove off the shallop again, and bring a couple of hand leads, and some strong lines for the use of the divers, with one block of the pig-iron which we had for ballast, and a good stout rope attached to it. As we pushed off with these articles on board, we saw the naked, dusky forms of both the Mosquito Indians, poising themselves with their clenched hands above their heads upon the gunwale of the launch, when, after swinging and swaying their bodies for a moment or two, they sprang into the air together, and dived head foremost down. By this time, so great was the eagerness, that half of the men were stripped as well as the Indians, and no sooner had the latter disappeared, than near a dozen stalwart fellows

leaped overboard and dived after them. But our countrymen were none of them skilful enough in the art to descend through five fathoms of water and yet keep their eyes keenly open and their wits well about them ; and as the shallop rubbed sides with the launch, their black, sleek heads and red, strained faces, began to appear puffing and blowing, like so many grampuses, all round the boats, and crying out that the water was too deep for them. One man alone, a slender, muscular young fellow, a Frenchman, who had been used, when a boy, as he told us, to dive from a pier, at Brest, for sous, alone brought up in his clutch a mass of slushy seaweed, grasped from the stump of one of the masts.

The Indians were, however, yet under water, and we were getting uneasy about them, when we saw their dark forms shooting between us and the foundered ship, and presently they stuck their black heads, for all the world like seals, above the surface, holding up their empty hands in token of their fruitless plunge. They had descended through one of the hatchways into the hold, and groped about there as they best could in the dim light, but except sheets of rotten canvas and masses of rusted iron, they found nothing. Upon this, Bedloe was immediately appealed to, as to the position of the precious coffers, and he declared that they lay

very deep indeed, almost at the keel of the vessel, in the stern, having probably been stowed under the great cabin. He had not been down himself, he said, as an asthma hindered him from diving, but both of his Indians had crept through the deck at the after hatchway, and he fully believed their report.

We now prepared to institute a fuller search, and with that view, making fast the great block of ballast-iron to the rope, we hove it overboard. The ponderous lump of metal fell upon the high quarter-deck, and crashed through the rotten wood, into the cabin beneath, startling whole shoals of flat-fish and eels, which glided and wriggled away, and sending up to the surface a boiling volume of thickened and turbid water, with little chips of wood, and ends of rope, which, thanks to pitch and tar, had remained unsaturated with moisture. We waited for a short time until the sea had cleared, and then Blue Peter and his comrade fastened the two hand-leads round their waists, leaving the other extremities of the lines attached to them in our hands, and then going gently over the side of the boat, grasped the downward leading rope and slid along it, just as though it had been a back-stay, until they disappeared beneath the shipwrecked vessel's decks, we, of course, letting out the lead-lines as the divers proceeded. A moment of great anxiety

followed, and I observed, that the Dwarf instead of having his eyes fixed, like most of us, upon the water, was looking about him very nervously, and fidgeting upon his seat, and moving and rubbing his fingers, and biting his lips, as people do who fear detection of misdeeds. Presently, the Indians again ascended to the surface, and again empty handed. There were nothing like chests or coffers, they said—only casks, which being quite rotten, they had broken into and found them full of flour, hard caked with the wet. There were also some old-fashioned carbines, a great grindstone, a quantity of rotten cables and hawsers, a small brass cannon, and a great unnameable mass of mouldering maetrial, which stirred when it was trodden upon, and blackened the water, so that, after a few moments, the Indians could see no more.

At this information, there were many threatening scowls cast upon the Manxman, but he bore them firmly enough.

“ Well, Paul Bedloe,” says the Captain, “ what say you to this ? ”

“ I presume, your divers are not so expert as mine—that is what I say,” answered the little man, coolly enough.

At this, Blue Peter fired up.

“ I say—dere are no coffers or treasure at all dere ! ” exclaimed the Indian : “ and Massa Cap-

tain Jem here believe Blue Peter, who never told him a lie—oh, never, not at all.”

“Yes, Blue Peter, I do believe you,” replied Captain Jem; “and if the prisoner here be dealing falsely with us, on his own head be the peril.”

This was the first time that the Captain had called Bedloe the “prisoner,” and the little man started at the phrase, very perceptibly; but he only said—

“I tell you what my Indians told me; and one of them brought up an ingot of silver, to prove that his words were true.”

I was, meanwhile, musing whether I should not try a dive myself. I remembered, that I had been tolerably expert at the exercise, when a boy, and so, stripping and buckling a hand-lead to my loins, as I had seen the Indians do to aid their descent. I plunged overboard into the tepid sea, and grasping the rope, found that I descended rapidly and easily, and that the water was so transparent, that I saw above me the keels of the boats, and below me the form of the cast-away ship, as clearly as though I gazed upon them through the gloaming of a Scottish summer's evening. It was a curious sensation, that of clinging to the rope in the mid-sea, with the water like a mass of thick green air, wavering and gurgling about me, and the indistinctly seen forms of

fishes gliding hither and thither, like little opaque phantoms,—and as strange was the feeling when I placed my foot, as though my body had no weight, upon the slimy deck, and felt the feathery sea-weed rise upwards at the pressure, and cling and wave about my legs. All this, of course, passed in a moment, and in the next I had descended through the after-hatchway, and steadying myself with my feet upon the lump of pig-iron, I had time to cast a hurried, but observant glance around me. A considerable portion of the deck had been torn away, or broken up, by the fall of the pig-iron, and down the aperture came a dull greenish light, showing the dim outline of great ribs of wood, and masses of timber-work, bulged and broken, with fragments of the rock projecting, here and there, through the crushed and splintered masses. Around me lay piled up rotting casks, and the fragments of bulk-heads, and the smouldering remains of furniture. I saw the holes where doors had led from cabin to cabin, sea-weed came waving through them. Shell-fish clung in clusters to what had been the rudder-case, and to rusty iron-work, which as I moved, upon the rotting wood and hemp, hurt my feet. Sprawling along the wreck, and rousing slimy fish from their lurking-places, I made my way to where I saw the sheen of glimmering metal, and presently I clutched what was the

brass box of a compass. Then throwing off my leaden sinker, I burst my way out of a quarter-gallery window, and rose rapidly to the surface, almost spent for want of air,—holding the compass above my head. It was a minute after I had breathed, before the loud ringing in my ears enabled me to hear the shouts of my comrades. They had seen the glimmer of the metal as I rose, and very naturally took the brass for gold; but they were soon undeceived, and after I had been hauled on board, and had time to examine my prize, I undeceived them still further, for I saw a name and a date upon the implement.

“So, comrades,” I exclaimed, “the little man is playing us false. The Santa Fè must have been lost before the year 1507, and upon this compass case is written, ‘Ericson. Amsterdam, 1645.’”

At this, there was a loud shout of wrath, and the seamen turned in fury to the dwarf; but he preserved a wonderful boldness,—all the nervous agitation was gone, and though he was pale, neither hand nor lip quivered.

“This is not the wreck of the Santa Fè,” thundered Captain Jem, “and we were dolts to take it for such. Timber must have mouldered away in half the time this vile dwarf would have us believe that the ship beneath us had lain under water. But take care,” and the captain turned

to Bedloe and shook him soundly,—“take care how you trifle with us, or, as you seem so fond of this wreck, by God, you shall lay your stunted bones in it.”

Paul Bedloe seemed prepared for this burst, for he said very calmly,—“I have told you what I know, and if you are deceived, it is because I was beguiled myself. The Indians spoke falsely.”

“And the ingot—the silver ingot!” shouted half a dozen of the men.

“That I saw with my own eyes brought up from the water,” replied Bedloe; “and he who recovered it said that there was much more where that came from.”

I looked hard into the dwarf’s eyes. He bore my gaze for a minute steadily enough, and then tried to turn away.

“You have lied in your throat,” I cried—“you have lied, and you know you have lied. There are two wrecks on the shoal.”

“There may be a dozen for all I know,” said the little man very stubbornly; “you may drown me if you will, but that will not put you nearer the treasures of the Santa Fè.”

Captain Jem paused and looked round upon the men, as though he were collecting their thoughts. Just then, the boatswain hailed from the schooner that the weather was getting very ugly to the southward. We all looked up, and

saw an ominous black cloud lying looming upon the sea, its upper edges gilded with a lurid glow, as though edged with red hot iron. The regular trade wind, too, had ceased to blow, except in faint sickly puffs, and the schooner began to rise and sink upon great swelling undulations from the southward, so that loose ropes and blocks shook and rattled, and the gaffs of the foresail and mainsail swung to and fro with a creaking, wheezing sound. It was clear that something unpleasant was brewing.

"Fasten a spare oar to the line," says the captain, pointing to the rope which descended to the wreck; "we may as well buoy the place." His directions were obeyed.

"Now, pull for the schooner. Lash that man's arms there with a bit of spun-yarn; he has brought it upon himself." And in a minute we were safe on board, and the dwarf, who made no resistance, was thrust well pinioned into the cabin.

"We have no time to trifle," said the captain, and so we all thought. Precious moments had been lost, without the symptoms of the weather having been attended to.

"We were looking for the gold," said the captain.

"And we were looking at you," replied the boatswain. In ten minutes the anchor was up,

the boats hoisted in, the sails set double reefed, and the schooner beating to the southward against heavy puffs of wind and a great tumbling swell. Our object was to weather either of the branches or horns of the shoal, then we could either scud or lie to, having plenty of sea-room. What we feared was, that the force of the squalls would strike us before we got clear of the fork in which we were embayed. Meantime the sky was growing every moment of a more lurid colour, as though the arch of heaven had been a great vault of brazen metal, and the surf was breaking in awful surges upon the reefs.

"Captain," says Bristol Tom, who was at the tiller, "we shall not weather the point; the wind heads her every moment." And, as he spoke, the sails flapped like thunder, and a great swell lifted the schooner and flung her bodily back a dozen fathoms. One of the men from the forecastle cried at the same time that the wind was coming, for that the sea was breaking white about a league away.

"We must run back through the shoal," says I.

The captain paused a moment. "There is no other hope," quoth he. "Fetch the dwarf on deck;" and immediately Bedloe made his appearance, and gazed anxiously at the weather. Captain Jem went below.

"You offered to pilot us already," I said, "and

you know the shoal well. I have seen your chart of it. You must bring us through now."

Captain Jem at this moment returned on deck, carrying two large pistols.

"If the schooner as much as scrapes a ridge of sand," says he, and he pressed the muzzle of one of the pistols so hard upon the dwarf's forehead, that when he took it away there was a round blue ring left above the eyebrow; "if the schooner as much as taps one oyster upon the coral—you cease to live!"

"That is no news," answered the dwarf, with the old shrug of the shoulders; "if the schooner strikes we all of us cease to live. Pooh, pooh, man! bullying avails not now. We are all of us more near being drowned than I am of being shot. Put up your pistols."

I declare I positively began to admire the dwarf. His cool courage was heroic. Captain Jem turned all manners of colours, whistled, grinned, then tried to appear stern; and, at last, stuck the pistol into the waistband of his trowsers, looking rather sheepish than otherwise. Then there was a pause, which the dwarf broke by saying in the old jeering tone.

"Well, Captain, do you want a pilot?"

"Do you undertake to run the schooner through these shoals into the open sea to the northward?" I replied.

"Why, I told you from the first, I would run you into the open sea," says the imperturbable Mr. Bedloe.

"Take charge of the schooner then," quoth the Captain.

"Unloose my arms," answered Bedloe. "I ought to have as good a chance as the others."

The Captain hesitated.

"Wounds, man!" cried the dwarf; "I give you my word of honour, I am not going to take the schooner from you."

The cool impudence of the fellow was amusing; and so, stepping forward, I cut the rope-yarns which bound him.

"Now, then," quoth he to Bristol Tom and the Captain, both of whom stood by the tiller, "look sharp for the pilot's orders."

The Manxman stepped to the weather beam, looked earnestly to windward and then aloft; after which, he walked back, whistling. The schooner was labouring heavily upon the swells, and the sky getting wilder and wilder.

All at once, the man at the mast-head shouted—"A sail!"

We were all of us startled at the news.

"Not the Spanish frigate, Johnson?" said I.

"No, no," returned the seaman. "It is a sort of boat—a big canoe. I can only see her when she lifts on the sea; but she carries a high mast

forward, with a small mizen astern, and she is edging in for the side of the shoals. By God, sir, she is among them!"

I was standing by the dwarf as we heard this. He leaped upon the bulwarks, clambered a few feet into the rigging, and then dropped upon the deck, exclaiming—"The Piragua!"

"What!" says the Captain—"your Piragua with the Indians and the Welshman?"

"That, and no other," answered Bedloe. "You see, gentlemen, I have told you no lies."

"The canoe is running for the lee of the large rock, where the dwarf lived," cries the man in the rigging.

"Then, by the Lord, they are more in love with coral reefs and sand-banks than I am!" replied Captain Jem.

"I don't know that they beant right, Captain," cries the boatswain. "That rock is big enough to make a good shelter under its lee; and there's a little cove there, if they can make it, where the small canoe was, where an undecked craft will be much snugger in such weather as this, than out in the open sea."

I was of the same opinion as the boatswain, and so I could see was Bedloe. All this time, we continued head to sea, thrashing away at the great surges, and just holding our own."

"Pilot!" cried the Captain, "why do you not

run through the channel at once, without waiting for the strength of the squall?"

"Because, Captain," answered the little man, very promptly — "because the wind comes in puffs, with lulls between; and neither I nor any other man can take a ship through these banks, unless he has her in full command."

This was so reasonable, that there was no more to be said, and we waited impatiently for the decisive minute. At length, it came. A heavy dank breath of air increased gradually but surely, until the schooner careened over heavily before it. The horizon to windward was becoming more and more obscured, the waves broke into white crests round us, and Bedloe signed to put the helm up and keep the schooner away. As the head of the ship fell off, and the sheets of the two great sails tore and struggled as they were being eased off, the pilot cried to Captain Jem, that he would run the schooner close past the rock, where his tent was, for that the most direct channel lay by it. Captain Jem told him that the ship was now under his charge; and at the same time, emphatically slapped the stock of the pistol in his belt, as a hint that the charge was a responsible one.

In less than five minutes, we were running fast among the breakers. The squall was now blowing fiercely, with pelting rain, which mingled with the

flying brine, torn up from the foaming tops of the breakers. The sea ran strange and broken in the channels of the reefs, jumping and tumbling about, furrowed and rent by the fury of the wind, and the cross sweeps of the great surges, which the lines of reef flung into different directions, and often caused to sweep round and round in great seething caldrons of foam. Through this howling waste of waters, the schooner flew like a meteor, plunging along the white tops of the seas, diverging now to one side, now to another, as the skilful eye of the pilot directed; all her motions kept thoroughly in hand, and leaving reef after reef, each avoided by a dexterous jerk of the helm, lying foaming behind.

We were now in the thick of the shoal. Ahead of us, and on the starboard bow, the rock which had been the dwarf's habitation, rose blackly out of the water. I saw by the course that we were steering, that we would shave it closely, and I sprang into the fore rigging, to keep a sharp look out. As I did so, I saw the mast of the "Piragua" rocking beyond the coral ledge—the canoe being evidently well sheltered in the lee of the rock. The squall now grew heavier and heavier, and on we drove in the thick of it, the sea flashing and hissing around us. We were close upon the reef. I could have touched the coral with an oar, as the receding wave poured down its jagged ledges,

when all at once, Bedloe shouted with a voice, which, though shrill, was as clear as a trumpet—

“Starboard—hard a starboard!”

I started round at the sound; and just at that moment, as the schooner's bow sheered to port, I saw the form of Bedloe, one instant poised upon the bulwark, and the next projected by a desperate leap into the air, and plunging amid the silvery tumult of the surges; into which, however, the dusky form had not yet vanished, when Captain Jem's pistols flashed and exploded with two rapid reports. Instinctively I turned ahead. The pestilent dwarf had by his last order sought to wreck the ship. Before us lay a barrier of coral, over which the sea poured, as a mighty river flashes over a weir.

“Port—hard a port—for the love of life—port,” I roared.

It was just in time, the schooner surged round from the reef—struggling and plunging in the tempest, and then shooting along the rock. We saw the piragua tossing on the broken water, and one of the naked crew in the act of leaping overboard with a line, no doubt to the aid of the dwarf, whose head, as he swam skilfully and strongly, favoured by the eddy, rose every minute upon the tops of the uneven and broken surges.

A hoarse shout of rage burst, in one inarticulate cry, from every one on board the schooner,

but we had our own lives to look after. Fortunately, we were now in the channel which I had been in the act of buoying, when we discovered the dwarf's retreat. My marks I could not, of course, discern; but I well knew the general lie of the reefs, and keeping my station in the weather-fore-rigging, I mustered all my coolness to con the ship. We had a dozen of hair-breadth escapes as we flew along. Very often the squall blew with such fury that the whole surface of the sea, deep and shallow, was of the same whiteness. Then a temporary lull would enable me to see the whereabouts of the ledges and banks, which I had already surveyed, so that I was enabled to shout my directions to Captain Jem, with something like confidence. But after all, it was terrible guess work. A sharp eye to watch, a skilful hand to work the ship, a steady heart to keep that eye bright and that hand firm, were what we needed, and that happily we possessed, so that after near half an hour, during which we stood with hands clenched and teeth set, no man daring to draw a full breath, we shot out from the bosom of shoals, and knew from the heavy rolling of the swells that we were in deep water, and in the open sea.

Lucky for us, it was not until then that the full fury of the squall came roaring down. The sky grew well nigh as mirk as midnight, and the

tempest hurtled through the air like the sweep of chariots and mighty squadrons in the clouds.

"In with all! furl and brail—furl and brail," shouted Captain Jem.

Happily, sail is easily taken off a fore-and-aft-rigged vessel. The struggling and flapping sheets of canvas were rapidly secured, the gaffs were lowered down upon deck, and the schooner was speedily running under bare poles dead to leeward. The squall, meanwhile, increased until it became almost a hurricane: the great waves were beaten down flat by the sheer force of the wind. We rushed along, the tempest whistling and howling in the rigging, in the centre of a roaring bed of foam, which the wind caught up and drove through the air, in clouds which almost blinded us. Presently, a blue flash of forked lightning tore through the blackness of the sky, accompanied by a fearful roar of thunder, and then flash followed flash, and peal succeeded peal, until, what with the tumult of wind and sea, the lashing of the rain, mingling with the brine, and the incessant bellowing of the thunder, it was no easy matter to give or to hear orders. As the rain poured down, heavier and heavier, the fury of the wind abated. Presently there were lulls, and the sea began to rise and heave around. At length there fell upon us such a deluge of rain, that had the hatches been off, I am confident that in half

an hour the ship would have foundered. The rain continued for some ten minutes, and then the great clouds broke up, and rolled hither and thither, showing streaks of blue sky, and cracks, as it were, through which the sun-light came slanting down athwart the gloom, tinging long strips of angry foaming water with its red fire. This was the break-up of the tornado, which had not lasted, in its strength, more than ten minutes, and, in an hour, we were under single reefed sails beating up against a heavy sea for the shoals again.

We had now leisure to converse upon the conduct of Bedloe, which appeared to many of us to be strange and mad, but I saw a consistency and a purpose in it all through. The great error the dwarf had made was in coming aboard of our ship, but I admired the cool candour with which he had disarmed our suspicions by telling us so much of what was true of his story, as soon as he imagined that I held the clue to the secret. Furthermore, I did not doubt that, had it not been for the appearance of the piragua in the nick of time, he would have carried us clear of the banks, but knowing that she was in the lee of the rock, and being well acquainted with the eddies of the reef, he had determined, by one bold push, to drown us and save himself. Opinions differed as to whether the piragua would not have been driven

from her shelter, in the full force of the hurricane, but there was only one sentiment as to the punishment which Bedloe deserved, and which, if ever he fell into our hands, we fully determined that he would receive. Meantime we were gradually working up to the shoal, and an hour before sun-set we saw the long lines of breakers, dotted here and there with dusky beads of rock, stretching out amid the blue rolling seas. You may be sure that many an eye was strained to make out the piragua. I got into the main-top with the best glass in the ship, and although it was difficult to make out anything with exactness, by reason of the violent motion of the schooner, yet I was pretty well convinced that the canoe was not under the lee of the "Dwarf's Rock," as we called it; and, furthermore, that the crew had not landed there, for the canvas of the tent was torn, and streaming in tattered ribbons into the air.

It was just before sundown that we learned the fate of the dwarf and his comrades. A great wave rising between us and the broad red disc of the sun as he set, amid a streak of hazy vapour, we observed a black object tossing on the very crest of the sea. We trimmed the schooner's course for this dim speck, and after losing and regaining sight of it many times, at length made out that it was a boat or canoe, waterlogged and abandoned. The sun was now beneath the horizon—the

speeding twilight of the tropics was waning fast away. The stars were already glimmering, and the leaden coloured sea, with its great dusky opaque waves, rolled blackly and hoarsely around us; when the schooner, plunging into a trough, swept within a couple of fathoms of the wreck. It was that of a large piragua, bottom upwards, part of her bows torn away, where she had crashed down upon a reef. As we went plunging by, a surge from our bows splashed over the piragua, and, rolling her round, as she wallowed log-like in the water, we all recognised the drowned corpse of Paul Bedloe lashed to the stump of the mast, his nerveless legs and arms jerking about with the wash of the water, his blue eyes open and staring, like the eyes of a fish, and his light hair now floating out when the sea rose above him, and anon, when it subsided, settling down and clinging round his white dead face. With the next heave of the sea the canoe turned over as it lay when we first saw it, and then drifted away down into the gathering darkness of the night.

CHAPTER XVII.

OF THEIR UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH FOR THE SUNKEN TREASURE—WEARYING AT LENGTH OF THE UNDERTAKING, THEY PURSUE THEIR COURSE—THE LEGENDS OF “NELL’S BEACON,” OR THE “CORPUS SANT.”

For three weeks and better did the “Will o’ the Wisp” lie off and on by the shoals. For three weeks the launch and shallop were day by day employed searching and dragging the reefs, but we found no treasure wreck. The remains of the ship to which Bedloe had conducted us were thoroughly searched, indeed the deck was altogether torn up, and some trifling amount of Dutch coin, with two good iron guns, and the small brass cannon, were recovered, but we gained no richer prize. Day after day, even when the glare of the sun was at its fiercest, might our boats be seen floating along the channels of the reef, two men at either bow leaning over the gunwale, so that their eyes were removed only an inch or so from

the water ; but, save coral and sand, they saw nought besides. Still I felt certain that the treasure lay upon the reefs, and we had many disputes as to the possibility of the dwarf having managed, by flinging certain fragments of rock, which we found upon the eastern edge of the shoal, and each of which was the nucleus of immense masses of clustering sea-weed, to hide the precious deposit from strange eyes. We all agreed that little or nothing of the ship could possibly be remaining ; but, as it was likely that the treasure was shipped in strong boxes, either of iron, or secured with that metal, it was quite possible that these lay in crevices of the rocks, their great weight mooring them, and that the dwarf had employed his leisure time before our arrival in covering them with the sea weed grown stones of which I spoke. But all these opinions were but idle wind. We knew not the truth. Some of the elder seamen would have it that the whole was the work of the devil—that the dwarf was a demon who haunted these lonely shelves to disturb and perplex poor mariners, and in the evening, when we sat upon deck smoking and drinking in the grateful twilight, many a dismal tale was rehearsed of phantoms of the sea, and particularly of the unearthly creatures whom many of the crew believed to dwell upon islands as yet unvisited by

mariners, and who try to scare away the human intruders upon their domains.

However, we at length got heartily tired of our sojourn amid the reefs; and the more so as we began to fear that we might miss the rich ship from Carthagena. A council was, therefore, held, at which we all agreed that we had wasted too much time already, seeking for the dwarf's treasure, and that the sooner the ship's head was turned to the southward the better. Accordingly, the next sunrise saw the boats hoisted up, our anchor safely catted at our bows, and the schooner running gaily upon her original course. We had rough weather and heavy seas ere we made the Samballas islands, to which we first intended to repair, and one stormy night I saw, for the first time, the appearance of that strange light which is sometimes seen on board ships at sea, and which the Spanish and Portuguese seamen know as the "copus" or "corpus sant," and which our sailors sometimes call "Nell's Beacon." The Spanish word seems to me to be clearly a corruption of "corpus sanctum,"—the holy body,—they tracing the light, which I believe to be nothing else than a mere harmless wandering meteor, to some religious or sacred origin. The night that the corpus sant appeared on board the Will o' the Wisp, was stormy and unsettled, the sky being piled with gloomy clouds, and the wind strong

and gusty. I was sitting by the steersman, when, looking aloft, I saw something like a greenish blue glare flickering along the weather end of the main cross-trees, just as if some one at a distance had been flashing a dark lantern through the rigging. I was rubbing my eyes, doubtful as to whether I had seen aright, when all at once the pale glimmer appeared, as it were, to become concentrated on one spot at the very end of the cross-trees, where it gleamed with a dim yet steady light, like a star.

The boatswain had the helm, and I pointed it out to him.

"Nell's Beacon," quoth he ; "I know it well. When it burns high up in the rigging, then it is a good omen, and a sign of fair weather ; but when it descends upon deck and moves to and fro, then it is time for all who see it to bethink themselves of their sins."

Meanwhile the other men of the watch having also observed the light, began to congratulate themselves thereupon, only expressing fears that it would descend to the deck, for which cause they watched it very anxiously. Determined, however, to examine the thing minutely, I climbed up into the rigging, and although the boatswain tried to dissuade me, I got upon the cross trees, and gazed upon the meteor as closely as I would do at the flame of a candle. The meteor surrounded the end of the spar upon which it

appeared, gleaming with a sort of pale glow, which was not flame, but rather like the light produced by flame, sometimes having a very ghastly blue colour, like the blaze of burning spirits, and anon turning of a greenish tint. Although the wind blew strong, the corpus sant did not waver or flicker like a flame, and I passed my hand through and through it, without feeling inconvenience. During the time I remained aloft, the meteor was becoming more and more dim, and soon after I had descended to the deck it disappeared. The remainder of the watch we passed discoursing upon this phenomenon. Some of the sailors said it was a sort of sea glow-worm, and others that it was a jelly which shone; but neither of these opinions is correct. Upon asking what the Spanish and Portuguese sailors said of it, one Thomas Lomax, who had been twice a prisoner in a ship of the former nation, told us, that the tradition of the Spaniards was to this effect:

A Spanish bark once set sail from Cadiz, bound for Sicily. They had very calm weather, and they feared at last that their water would run short. All the crew, therefore, made vows to St. Antonio, and promised to place a silver candlestick upon his shrine, if he would send them a prosperous breeze. The captain of the ship alone refused to join in their prayers, saying that St. Antonio could no more send them a wind than

a pig could see it, and vowing that at all events if it were not so, the saint was a shabby fellow not to give poor sailors a breeze without their having to rob their wives and families to pay him for it. But day after day passed by, and the sails still hung in unwinking folds from the lateen yards, and the reflection of the ship could be seen in the sea as in a mirror. One evening, after a very hot day, the air felt even closer than usual, and the captain told the men that he must reduce still further their allowance of water. That night, therefore, they redoubled their supplications to the saint, and the captain, who, by the bye, was a Frenchman, redoubled his abuse of him, swearing that St. Antonio could not muster as much wind as would blow out a candle, far less urge on a ship. The words had hardly been spoken when a great light shone upon the vessel, and, running to the stern, they all saw St. Antonio, with a halo round his head, coming walking upon the water towards them. At this, they all fell upon their knees, and even the French captain grew pale, and his legs almost failed him. Meantime the saint walked upon the sea up to the stern, and, placing his hand upon the taffrail of the ship, said :

“This to confound thy unbelief, thou contemner of holy men and things !”

At the same time giving the ship what appeared

to be a slight push, but which flung her forward as if she had been a stone hurled from a sling. The saint having performed this feat, instantly vanished, and at the same moment a fearful storm, the like of which was never seen by man, suddenly arising, drove on the ship with the same rapidity as that which the hand of the saint had imparted to her. Meantime all the crew were on their knees praying to the Virgin to intercede for them with St. Antonio, and expecting nothing less than instant death. But the ship continued to drive with unearthly rapidity, although without injury, and beginning to take courage, they observed, on looking about, a bright light burning upon that part of the taffrail which the saint had touched with his hand. For three days and three nights the miraculous storm lasted. The ship flew through the water quicker than birds cleave the air, and the supernatural nature of the tempest was made still more evident by the fact that it was not general over the sea, but that within half a cable's length from the ship the ocean and the air were either perfectly at rest, or a pleasant breeze was blowing, and vessels were sailing with a fair wind in the opposite direction to that in which the saint-cursed ship was driven. Still, however, the mariners did not cease to importune St. Antonio for pardon, and the captain was loudest in his prayers, and most lavish in his

vows. At length, at midnight on the third night, the light, which had never ceased to burn, suddenly moved from its place, and flitting to the mast, began to ascend it. As the meteor rose into the air, the fury of the storm lulled. The mariners, seeing this, fell upon their knees and put up loud thanksgivings. The light continued to rise until it glittered upon the highest point of the rigging, to wit, the end of the great lateen yard, where having remained steady for some time, it gave a sudden bright flash, and then soared into the air, until the gazers could distinguish it no longer amid the stars. The wind then fell as suddenly as it had risen, and the strained ship again floated tranquilly upon unbroken water. When the day dawned, the crew saw land barely a league a-head of them, and a fishing boat coming off soon after, they learned that they were off Cape Epiphane in the island of Cyprus, having traversed, in an incredibly short space of time, almost the whole length of the Mediterranean sea. A pleasant breeze, however, soon sprang up from the east, and having obtained what water and stores they needed, they turned the ship's head westward, and arrived without accident at their port in Sicily, where great honours were paid to the shrine of St. Antonio. From that time to this, say the mariners of Spain, the light

which the touch of a holy body—a corpus sanctum—created, has never been extinguished, but floats over the ocean, appearing now as a warning of approaching death, anon as a harbinger of hope to mariners.

This was the Spanish tale of the Corpus Sant, and I now asked for the English legend of “Nell’s Beacon.”

“Why,” quoth the boatswain, “I never heard it told; but often I have heard it sung both afloat and ashore, in the taverns at Limehouse or Portsmouth Point, and aboard many a ship in many a sea.” Thereupon, all the watch desiring to hear the song, the boatswain, in a very coarse gruff voice, chanted the following stanzas, which, rude as they are, I put down just as I heard them:—

The Legend of “Nell’s Beacon.”

There are stormy seas do roll,
Which the boldest well may dread,
When the east wind whistles snell
On the cliffs of Beachy Head.
By that coast, tempest beaten,
On the sea-weed clustered stones,
Stout-hearted sailors many,
Have laid their weary bones.

From the sandy shores of Eastbourne,
Nigh the rocks whereof I sing,
Sailed a brave and lusty seaman,
And his name was Richard King.

He was captain of a trading sloop,
Which voyaged unto the Seine,
And 'twas Beachy Head he always made
When he returned again.

For there, from eve to dawning,
A beacon always shone
During the time, whate'er it was,
That Richard King was gone.
From the window of a cottage
That beam came, ever bright,
For there sat Nelly, Richard's wife,
And trimmed the lamp all night.

She trimmed it, for she knew
That her husband dear would gaze,
When the white cliffs loomed a-head,
For those love-enkindled rays ;
And when he saw them flicker,
Through the darkness of the night,
He would straightways cry right cheerily,
" There's Nelly's Beacon Light."

But, ah ! these long night watches,
They paled poor Nelly's cheek ;
Her eye was bright and fevered,
But her step grew slow and weak.
Her husband bent above her,
And she looked up in his face—
" I'm wearing fast away," quoth she ;
" I go unto my place.

" But you are bound to sea, dear,
To the stormy Spanish shore ;
Look, Richard, look upon your Nell,
You ne'er may see her more !
But watch when you return, dear,
You will know that I am dead,
If no light shines out to greet you
From the top of Beachy Head.

"Yet death shall never part us,
For, if it lawful be,
My soul shall fly to you, dear,
Athwart the roaring sea ;
But not a ghastly sheeted corpse
Shall I appal your sight,
You will see an airy Beacon,
And my soul will be the Light."

The storm roared loud at midnight,
With sleet, and wind, and rain ;
The struggling ship tossed wildly
On the rocky coast of Spain :
When suddenly the captain cried—
" Oh God, my wife is dead !"
Upon the topmast gleamed a light—
The light of Beachy Head !

* * * * *

Two score of years went slowly by,
And again the storm blast blew,
Old Richard King, with long grey hair,
Spoke cheerily to the crew.
" Oh look aloft, my gallant boys,
There's hope within our sight,
A kindly spirit watches us—
There's Nelly's Beacon Light !"

But as he spoke, the Beacon
Came floating through the air,
The captain knew the sign—he knelt
In thanksgiving and prayer.
The tempest swept him from the deck,
But as he sunk like lead,
Above his forehead shone the light
Which gleamed from Beachy Head !

And still in time of tempest
Does Nelly's Beacon burn,
Sometimes it shines aloft to cheer,
Sometimes alow to warn ;
But it reads us all this lesson—
True love is never dead,
The symbol shines on every sea
That shone from Beachy Head !

CHAPTER XVII.

A KNAVE OF THE CREW, PLAYING WITH COGGED DICE,
IS KEEL HAULED.

Four days after leaving the reefs, we saw land ahead, and presently were running in amid the clusters of the Samballas Isles. On every side of us, these rich islands flung, as it were, their masses of foliage into the sea; bushes clothing the rocks where such existed, and at other points thick mangrove woods, the stems of the trees often covered with oysters, growing far into the water. These forests appeared to swarm with birds and beasts. We heard the loud screams of thousands of unknown fowls resounding from the woods; and often, as we skirted the shore, watching places where the trees did not grow thick, we descried troops of monkeys going chattering along, or herds of peccary and deer, breaking through the bushes. Sea-birds also abounded.

Great clouds of plovers flew, wheeling and circling along the shore, and the white sandy beaches and the sea were dotted with turtles basking in the sun, or lazily sleeping on the top of the smooth water. The Samballas Islands are thinly inhabited by scattered tribes of Indians, who subsist by hunting and fishing, and are very willing to aid as guides or pilots to the English and French privateers who put in here; so that the first canoe which we saw made directly towards us, and the two Indians who guided it came on board very readily, and were treated with brandy and wine, much to their satisfaction. From them we learned that several privateers had been lately in these islands, to careen and provision; and that the Spaniards from Porto Bello and Carthagena, had sent a fleet of armadilloes, as they are called, being small vessels of war, which had swept all the channels between the islands, and had captured one privateer, a tartan of four guns, commanded by Captain Coxon, having surprised her in a creek where she was careening. We questioned these Indians respecting the galleon which the Spanish prisoner at Jamaica had told us of. They knew that many rich ships sailed annually from Carthagena to Old Spain, but could tell no particulars, conjecturing, however, that if any vessel with a freight of price were now fitting for sea, she would sail after the return of the armadilloes to Carthagena, judging

that they would have, for the present, cleared the coast. This information, which jumped with our own ideas, made us very anxious to take in what provisions we stood in want of, and be off to the westward; and the same afternoon the friendly Indians piloted the schooner into a very snug bay, where we lay with trees all round us, except at one point where an opening in the woods conducted to a noble savannab, whither we often went to hunt. While we lay here, all hands were fully occupied. Upon the beach, near the schooner, we erected a place for preparing boucan, which we preferred to regularly salted meat; and of which Nicky Hamstring, who had a natural turn for cooking in all its branches, was appointed superintendent. Then the Mosquitto men went daily in their canoe, and struck turtle and manatee. Hunting parties, whereof I generally made one, explored the woods and brought good store of peccary and deer down to the boucan. We shot also the tender young monkies, who often made my heart sore by their screaming and moaning when they felt the lead, and by the pitiful way in which, when they came by a broken bone, they would handle the useless limb, and grin and weep with the pain. Besides these, we made food of the guanias or yellow lizards, who live amid the branches, and love to bask in the sun upon the topmost boughs, and also of a species of red land-

crab, which our men call soldiers, from their colour, and which run nimbly about, generally at the roots of trees, hiding themselves quickly in holes, and burrowing like rabbits. The Indians who conducted our schooner into this bay, lived with others not far off, in smoky huts, which were surrounded by patches of cleared land, wherein they grew good store of yams and plantains, which they sold very willingly for hatchets, saws, and such like implements, with powder and lead. Meantime, while a great part of the crew were thus busy on shore, Captain Jem, with the hands who remained on board the schooner, was occupied in changing her appearance as much as possible; for we knew that the Spaniards have no lack of spies either in Jamaica or the other English islands, and we misdoubted that an account of the schooner had been sent to Cuba, and from thence to the main. We, therefore, repainted the ship, making a great yellow streak from stem to stern, with false ports, and also made a shift to alter, to the eye at least, the trim of the ship, by placing false bulwarks towards the stern, which heightening her from the foremast all the way aft—the painted streak being made to correspond with the new bulwarks—caused the schooner to have a clumsy look, as though she were down by the head, in consequence of carrying an ill-stowed cargo. We also changed the set of the masts, by putting

heavy strains upon the rigging; and lastly, we patched the sails, although they were new and good, with old canvas; conducting our operations with such good effect, that the crew swore to a man, that had they been away for a week, they would never have recognised the schooner for the "Will-o'-the-Wisp."

Being at length in readiness for our cruise, we towed the ship out of the little bay, and commenced beating to windward through the islands, passing the isle called Las Sound, where the Buccaneers have a legend, that the heart of Sir Francis Drake lies buried in four caskets, of lead, of iron, of silver, and of gold. I see no reason, however, for believing that his heart was not in his body when that was committed to the deep in the bay of Porto Bello, amid the thunder of artillery, and the crash of the martial music, in which the great admiral so much delighted. As we worked up against strong westerly breezes, we met with several fleets of large canoes, laden with sugar, hogs, yams, and corn, running before the trades; but as we were now approaching Carthagená, we thought it most prudent to let these piraguas pass by unmolested, hoisting Spanish colours, and making as though we were a friendly trader. So in due time, we left the westernmost of the Samballas keys to the leeward, and stood off to the north-west, designing to make a long stretch out to sea, so as to

prevent any intelligence of our whereabouts being conveyed along the main land to Carthagera.

Towards the afternoon of the day on which we cleared the Samballas, I having the charge of the deck, could not help noticing the miserable plight of one Simon Radley, a young sailor, who was a very quiet well-behaved fellow, and a favourite on board. When we left Jamaica, he had been very well dressed in seaman fashion; but now, he was clothed merely in rags, without a shirt, and his shoes were only bits of canvas swathed round his feet, and very coarsely sewn together. Besides all this, the poor fellow looked almost broken-hearted, and went about his work very sadly.

"Simon Radley," quoth I, "how came you in this plight? Have you lost all your clothes? Surely if you have, your comrades will lend you some, and you can make it up to them with the first of your prize money."

Well, at first, the fellow would answer never a word. At length he muttered that he had been unlucky, very unlucky, but that it was nobody's fault but his own, and that he would be better off soon. I insisted, however, on knowing what he had done with his clothes, upon which, after a great deal of stammering and hesitation, he plucked up his heart, and said, broadly, that I had no business with his clothes, and that, if he chose to wear a clout, or paint himself and go naked like

the savages, it was nothing to me, or to any one else, so long as he did his duty manfully. Just as he was speaking, up came the boatswain, John Clink.

"Simon Radley," says the old fellow, "you speak like a fool. It concerns us all, to see our comrades so bestowed as that they shall have the best chance of keeping their health, and not turning sick upon our hands. Now, I know where your clothes are, well. I have had my eye on you for some days past. Your clothes are in George Bell's chest, with a good quantity of the clothes of the other men as well."

"Hush, hush," says Radley, "there is honour in these things. If they are in George Bell's chest, it is because they belong to him."

"But how!" cries I. "Have you sold the clothes, Simon?"

"Sold them—no," says Clink. "He has lost them, or been cheated of them, at dice, with that fellow Bell, who is a sneaking vagabond, and always skulking out of the way, whenever he is wanted."

I remembered now that I had very often seen Bell playing dice with others of the crew, but had taken no particular notice, such games being very common among privateer's men.

"And so you have had bad luck, Simon?" rejoined I.

“Bad luck,” interrupted Clink: “yes, and most of those have bad luck who play with George Bell.”

The conversation continuing, we gradually drew from Radley, that he had played with Bell for all the ready money which he possessed on leaving Jamaica, and lost it; that then he had played for a good set of mathematical instruments, and lost them; that then he had played for all his clothes, and lost them; and, although for some time his shipmates had supplied him, that he had lost in succession every article of clothing so given to him, in the same way; and that finally, he had played for and lost his chances of prize-money during the whole cruise. All this the poor fellow told with great reluctance, seeming to consider such disclosures as a breach of honour; but on John Clink saying that, in his belief, Bell had been a common sharper in London, and had bubbled poor Radley out of his property, Simon grew very indignant, and swore that, if it were so, he would have Bell's blood. However, we pacified him, and made him understand that before making any charge, we must have better proof. George Bell at this time being below, and in his hammock, I called up a number of the crew in succession, all of whom said that they had played with Bell, and that they had never won anything; that if, now and then, a cast of the dice

was in their favour, yet that they always rose the losers. Some of these men had had their suspicions of Bell's play, but as they had never compared notes, they were not aware, until I questioned them, how very similar all their cases were. They knew, indeed, that Simon Radley had been stripped, but they were loath to accuse a shipmate of foul play.

"Why, then," quoth John Clink, "that fellow, Bell, must own about half the property in the ship, if your tales be all true. This must be looked into."

"With whose dice do you play?" says I: and they all answered, that generally it was with Bell's, for that several men who had brought dice on board had lost them, they knew not how, but Bell had several sets. This information increased our suspicions very much, and desiring all hands to keep the matter to themselves, and by no means to give a hint to Bell that he was suspected, I informed Captain Jem of the whole affair.

"The snivelling, cur-hearted miscreant," quoth honest Captain Jem, his plump red cheeks glowing with indignation, "I never saw anything good in that fellow since he came on board. He is a pitiful skulk, and never stirs out of his hammock except when he is driven. It was he who counselled us to strike to the Spanish frigate, but

if we find him out in his roguish tricks his back shall so smart for it, as shall cause him to think that his spine be stuffed full of pepper instead of marrow."

So it was determined that Bell should be closely watched, and the dice which he was so fond of using, examined at the first convenient opportunity. Nor had we long to wait for its occurrence. In a little more than an hour, the suspected culprit came on deck, not thinking any harm, and going to the cook-house returned with a portion of boucanned pork, off which he made a very good dinner, with the help of a clasp-knife, and then having washed down the meat with several hearty draughts of brandy, he accosted my old friend Le Picard, and asked him whether he would shake a wrist with him. Now Picard had been also below and asleep, when the investigation into Mr. Bell's character had been going on, and the men having kept their own counsel, Le Picard had no idea of what was in the wind. So presently, they sat down and began to play upon the combings, or ledge of the hatchway, Bell having produced the dice and dice-boxes. I watched the suspected sharper very closely when the game was going on, and noted his general sly down-cast look, and the small way which he opened his eye-lids, always peering about him with suspicious blink-

ing eyes. Then, again, I observed his hand, which, although dirty and tarry enough, was not the hand of a man who had been all his life accustomed to handle ropes and marlin spikes. Meanwhile, quite a circle of spectators gathered round the players, a circumstance not usual, as the stakes were trifling, but which Le Picard took no notice of. Bell, on the other hand, looked often about him, and seemed puzzled at the interest which so many of the crew took in the matter. However, he said nothing, but played on, so far as I could see very fairly, and the luck went from one to the other, as is usual in the game. At last, Le Picard grew impatient.

"Come," quoth he, "*Allons, mon camarade, jouons plus fortément.* Let us play for a better stake."

"I am agreeable," replied the other, softly.

"*C'est bien, alors.* Let it be a double doubloon; I have not many left."

The Frenchman pulled out the piece of gold, and placed it on the ledge of the hatchway. Bell, after some searching, real or pretended, plucked another piece from his pocket, holding, as I observed, the dice all the while in his hand.

Captain Jem, who stood by me, did not fail to observe this as well as I, and whispered to me that the fellow by this manœuvre might well have changed the ivory. I nodded.

"A thunderstorm, or a single flash?" says Bell, meaning, shall we decide the game by one cast, or in a great many.

"Oh, one flash; short and sweet!" quoth the Frenchman. Both of them rattled the dice and flung them forth.

"Trays," called out Le Picard.

"Sixes," exclaimed Bell; "the money is mine," and he grasped the gold greedily.

"I will hold you doubles or quits," cried Le Picard, in true gambling spirit.

"Well, if you want your revenge, I suppose I must not say no," answered the other, in a quiet unobtrusive tone.

The dice were again thrown, and this time the Frenchman had quatres, and Bell, as before, sixes. Muttering a great oath, poor Picard fished up the stakes from the bottom of his pocket, and was handing them to the winner, when Captain Jem cried in a loud voice, "Stop."

Both players looked up in surprise.

"Bell," said the captain, sternly, "hand me over that dice."

"Why, captain," quoth the other, in a cringing tone, getting suddenly very pale, and looking quickly all about him; "why, captain, there has been no foul play, I hope? We are gentlemen adventurers on board this ship."

And, with that, his hand stole slyly towards his pocket, as if to deposit there his winnings. Ob-

serving this motion, however, I grasped his wrist and defeated his intention, the dice falling from his fingers. At the same time, Captain Jem caught him by the collar of his doublet, crying out—

“Why, thou booby, thine own words condemn thee; who spoke of foul play but yourself? I only asked you for the dice, and you straightway think you are accused of cheating.”

At this Bell looked sheepish enough, but presently, recovering himself, began to bully and curse, swearing that he was a gentleman and a man of honour, and requesting to know by what right his dice had been taken from him.

“Come here, Simon Radley,” says Captain Jem, and Simon stood forth, shaking his clenched fist at Bell.

“Have you not lost every farthing you possessed, as well as your clothes and your chances for the cruise, to this man?” says the boatswain.

Simon replied that it was so, and was entering into particulars, when Bell burst out, with a great affectation of scorn and indignation—

“A pretty fellow,” quoth he, “to game with a gentleman, and then, when fortune is adverse, to go and prate of your losses, and charge your adversary with foul play. Go to, man! had I lost, I never would have accused you of cheating. But you throw no dice with me again.”

“No, that you may depend upon,” answered Radley.

"Stay," cried Captain Jem, "we are going but rashly to work. Let all the men here who have diced with George Bell hold up their hands."

Thereupon, more than two thirds of the crew made the sign.

"Good," replied the captain ; "now, let those who have lost money, or aught else to him, hold up their hands."

Nearly the same number of hands were immediately displayed. Bell grew yellow in the face, and glared about him with fierce spite.

"Good again," continued the captain ; "Mr. Bell, I must congratulate you ; fortune has been very kind to you—very kind indeed. Now, let those who have won money or aught else of George Bell hold up their hands."

Two hands were raised, and their owners being interrogated, it appeared that they had gained, one of them, not more than a couple of groats, and the other merely a small rusty pistol, which had burst the first and only time he had fired it, and against which he had staked, being incited by Bell, a good perspective glass.

"So, then, gentlemen and comrades," pursued Captain Jem, "the case stands thus : here are a score of you have played with this man ; and, although each man of that score ought to have had as good a chance of winning as Bell, yet the fellow has beaten you all, one after another ; and

the only winnings from him have been contemptible matters not worthy speaking of."

The crew here uttered a loud murmur of acquiescence, and some of them began to threaten Bell with their fists. Still he tried to put a good face on the matter, although his tongue faltered as he spoke.

"You are mistaken, gentlemen," he cried, "indeed you are; I will take my Bible oath that I played fair; nay, if you do not believe me, I am willing to give up all my winnings, and surely that ought to satisfy everybody. But I assure you, comrades, if I were to be hanged this minute, I would still say that you had no wrong from me. I am incapable of cheating, gentlemen! I do not understand how to cog dice, upon my soul; indeed, indeed I do not."

"That fellow's tongue would hang him if there were but one rope in the world," says the boatswain; "he was the first to talk of foul play, and now he is the first to talk of clogged dice."

"We will soon settle that matter," says the captain, "and that by splitting open the ivory."

"Oh, certainly, certainly, I agree to that," says Bell; "here are my dice, sir," and he whipped out several cubes from his pocket.

"No, no," interrupted I, "never mind these; we will try the dice with which you won the two doubloons, e'en now." And one of the men

having fetched a hammer, I placed the morsel of ivory upon the ledge of the hatchway. Upon seeing this, Bell went down plump upon his knees, and raised a dismal howl.

"Ah, you can be penitent enough now, chicken-heart," says Captain Jem; whilst I, having splintered the dice with a blow, we discovered a small bent piece of lead, very neatly inserted in one of the specks of the deuce side of the cube, not, however, drilled perpendicularly into the ivory, but artificially deposited in a sort of burrowing hole, running along just under the surface of that side of the square. It was evident that, to prepare a dice in this fashion required a hand very skilful and well accustomed to the work. The men crowded round to see it, uttering furious menaces against the convicted sharper, who never moved from his knees, but continued to supplicate most piteously for mercy.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Captain Jem; "mercy, forsooth. Thou art one of the first privateersmen I ever heard of cheating his comrades, and thou shalt smart for it, or I no longer command this schooner."

"Do not flog me—for mercy's sake, do not flog me!" the fellow bawled; "I cannot bear flogging—it will kill me—it will be murder if you flog me. I was flogged once, and the doctor said it all but killed me;" and so, crying and howling,

the pitiful creature cast him down upon the deck, and bemoaned himself in the most abject misery of spirit.

"Flogged before," said the boatswain. "Ay, I warrant thee. Aboard what ship?"

"Aboard no ship at all," roared the culprit. "On shore. Oh, dear!—oh, dear!"

"On shore," answered the boatswain. "At the cart's tail, I presume?"

"Yes, yes," cried Bell; "but I give you my word of honour, sir—my sacred word of honour, that I was not guilty then. It was another man."

"Not guilty then," says Nicky Hamstring. "No; no more than you are now, I dare affirm."

The miserable devil gave no answer, but made as though he would catch the legs of the men about him, and cling to them. In all my life, I never saw such a pitiful hound.

"Keel-haul the fellow," says one of the men, "and see whether the brine won't wash the roguery out of him." And the others joined in the cry: "Yes, yes, keel-haul him."

At this the culprit sat up upon the deck and looked earnestly in the faces of the men through his tears. I do not think he understood what keel-hauling meant.

"Anything," says he, whining like a hungry cat; "anything sooner than flogging."

"Very good," says Captain Jem. "Be it so."

Truly, on second thoughts, it would be degrading hemp to put it to any other use about such a scoundrel, except hanging him."

Meantime, half a dozen of the men, in great glee at the anticipated ducking, went about the preparations without loss of time.

The punishment of keel-hauling, I premise, that we borrowed from the Dutch. Its name describes its nature. The prisoner is fastened to a rope led under the vessel's keel, and hauled beneath her bottom, as often as his guilt seems to require. It is evident that this is a punishment the severity of which depends greatly upon the size of the ship, and the frequency with which the process is repeated. To be hauled under the keel of a great ship of war is a very different thing from being hauled under the keel of a small sloop; but in order to give the punishment its requisite severity on board small craft, the culprit is often hauled all along the keel, being let over the bows, and taken up at the stern; a process by which he is sure to be at least half drowned and half scraped to death by the rough barnacles and jagged shell fish which generally encase a ship's bottom. In the present case it was determined, however, that Bell should undergo the easier mode of punishment, and be hauled from bulwark to bulwark,

but the dose was to be administered twice, giving him a breathing time between. Accordingly, by the help of a sounding lead, first a thin line and afterwards a stout cord were conducted under the ship's keel, Mr. Bell watching the process with great anxiety.

"What—what are you going to do with me?" at length he cried, beginning to comprehend the nature of his punishment. "You do not mean to drag me under the ship?"

"You have hit it, my hearty," says the boat-swain; "hit it to a tee. Yes; we will give you an opportunity of inspecting the run of the schooner, and if you fail to observe all its beauties the first time, don't break your heart, you will have another chance immediately after."

At this the cowardly animal began to howl and blubber again.

"You will drown me, you will; it's murder. There were sharks about the ship all yesterday. I will never come up alive! Have mercy on me! I have a wife and family in England. I would rather be flogged than put overboard. I would rather be flogged, indeed I would."

At this moment Captain Jem came up.

"Rather be flogged, would he? A minute ago he sang another tune. Why, you discontented thief," roared the captain, "you would not be

pleased even although we were to hang you. Come, men, bear a hand, and have him overboard in a trice."

Immediately, half a dozen stout fellows flung themselves upon the miserable culprit. He roared, swore, and prayed, all in a breath, kicked out with his legs and arms, and sought to bite and scratch like a wild cat. But he was speedily mastered, his arms pinioned securely, his ancles tied together, and the rope which ran under the keel made fast under his armpits. He was then lifted and carried to the larboard bulwarks, half a dozen men holding the end of the rope, which passed beneath the keel and came up on the starboard side, while two or three hands had charge of the continuation of the line, so as to steady his descent in the first dive, and to pull him back by in the second.

All this time the vagabond never ceased to abuse and swear at us, seeing that cries for mercy availed not. Captain Jem gave the word—

"Heave and pall," and instantly Mr. Bell went with a splash into the sea, struggling for a moment on the surface, and then, as the men on the starboard side hauled the rope, disappearing in the water.

"Rattle him round," says the captain. "He must not drown for all he is such a villain." The men ran across the deck with the rope; there was

a surge and a jerk, when the poor devil struck the projecting keel, but he was instantly dragged beneath it, and the next moment he made his appearance on the larboard side, struggling, panting, and coughing up the water, his face all blue and bleeding from having been scraped along the bottom, and his clothes torn by the jagged shells of the barnacles.

"Oh, Lord!" he gasped; "murder—it is—murder;" and then the coughing well nigh choked him.

"Down with him again," cried the captain. The end of the rope which had been before used as a guy was promptly manned, and Bell again disappeared beneath the water, was again rudely jerked against the keel, and then hauled up the side of the ship, and cast upon deck all bleeding and insensible, with his hands blue and cramped, and his limbs quite limp and motionless. By Captain Jem's direction he was held up by the legs, when presently he vomited up a great quantity of sea water, and then began to stir and moan, with great fits of coughing. His hands and legs were then released, and presently he managed to sit up on deck, leaning against the mast, and looking as if he had just wakened out of a dream.

"Let this be a warning to you, Mr. Bell," said the captain, "how you play dice in future. I

presume you will only stay in this ship until you have a chance of going on board another. None of your own property, however you came by it, will be taken away, but all that you cheated your comrades of must be restored."

Accordingly, Bell's chests were opened, a general distribution took place, and that evening Simon Radley appeared in his former attire. As for the sharper himself, we afterwards learned that he had been a well-known rogue in London, and after having been twice flogged at the cart's tail, had been tried for ring dropping, and transported to the plantations of Virginia, from which he managed to escape, and after divers adventures in the West Indies—whereof the greater part were more complimentary to his ingenuity than to his honesty—he had shipped on board our schooner at Jamaica, as the reader has seen.

END OF VOL. I.





